

H. D. O.

DISCOURSES
ON
SEVERAL SUBJECTS;
BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF SOME SELECT
HOMILIES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
RENDERED IN A MODERN STYLE,
AND FITTED FOR THE GENERAL USE, AND CHRISTIAN
INSTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE,
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

BY
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LATE OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD, AND RECTOR
OF HINXWORTH, HERTS.

"Ask thy Father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will
tell thee." DEUT. xxxii. 7.

"The love of things ancient doth argue stayedness, but levity and
want of experience maketh apt to innovation."

HOOKER'S POLITY.

"Ὅτι ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα.

GREG. NAZ.

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THE MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF MAN AND CIVILIZATION
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DISCOURSES
ON
SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

DISCOURSE I.

Upon the Place and Time of Prayer.

ISAIAH lvi. 2. 7.

Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it, that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and his hands from doing any evil. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

WE read, in the first book of Moses, that in the beginning God, by his almighty power, wisdom, and goodness, created both heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, and stars, the fish in the sea, and all other creatures for the use of man; that he also created man in his own image, and gave him power and rule over the rest of the creation, in order that he might use all these good creatures

according to the command he had received, and that he might prove himself thankful and obedient for all the benefits so liberally and graciously bestowed upon him, without any desert or merit of his own; for as to his bodily composition, he was made out of the dust of the earth, and all the good in him proceeded from the pure inspiration of the breath of God, by which he became a living soul, or an animated creature, indued with powers and virtues which he could not otherwise have obtained. Now though we ought at all times, and in all places, to have in remembrance, and to be thankful to our gracious Maker, according to the words of the Psalmist, *I will magnify the Lord always*; and again, *wheresoever the Lord beareth rule, O my soul praise the Lord*: yet it appears to be God's good will, that we should gather ourselves together at stated times, and in particular places, for the purpose of magnifying his name, and that his glory may be published in the congregation of his saints or faithful servants. As to the time which the Almighty hath appointed for his people to assemble solemnly together, for the purpose of his holy worship, it is clearly established by the fourth commandment; *Remember, saith God, that thou keep holy the Sabbath day*; upon which day, it is very clear, from what we find in the Acts of the Apostles, that the people were accustomed to resort together, to hear diligently the law, and the prophets read unto them: now although this commandment of God doth not in all cases oblige christians to observe the laws concerning the Sabbath so very strictly as the Jews did, either in respect of refraining from some acts of work (which are allowable in case of positive necessity), as of keeping particularly the seventh day, after the manner of the Jews (since our Sabbath, or day of rest, is the first day of the week, or Sunday, set apart and kept in honor jointly of our Savior Christ, who, as he made the world,

so by his rising from the grave, as on that day, did prove his victory over sin and death). Yet notwithstanding these great privileges vouchsafed us by the laws of christian liberty, whatever the commandment directs, as touching the law of natural religion, to be most godly, just, and proper for the exaltation of God's glory, that must be strictly observed, nor can it possibly be dispensed with by any truly christian person. This commandment then shews plainly, that there is a *time* (one day in the week) whereupon we ought to rest even from *most* of our lawful and necessary labours; and as the same law directs, that no man should be idle during six days of the week, but diligently employ himself in that state wherein God hath placed him, in like manner God hath given a positive charge to all men, that upon the *Sabbath day* (which is now our Sunday) they should cease from all their weekly and worldly works, in remembrance of the creation of the world, and to perpetuate God's power and glory therein; that as the Almighty himself was pleased to employ exactly six days in perfecting his wonderful work of creation, and ceased the *seventh* day, blessing, and sanctifying, and consecrating it to quietness and rest, rendering the observance of it even productive of repose to the very *cattle*; so it becomes all God's true servants to pass the Lord's day in the most holy manner, by resting from their daily common business, and giving themselves entirely to the serious exercises of God's true religion and service. Hence you see our heavenly Father doth not only barely *command* the due respect to be paid to this holy day, but to render the duty stronger, doth press us by the record of his own act to attend to the serious *cause* of so doing; and as all truly virtuous children are not only obedient to the commandment of their parents, but also pay strict regard to all their ways, and with pleasure imitate their practice, so if we

desire to be the children of our heavenly Father, we must be most scrupulously careful to keep the christian sabbath, not only because it is God's express command (which in itself indeed would be sufficient obligation), but also to shew our respect and love to so holy and gracious a Parent, who appointed it as a sign of our blessed Lord's having finished and sealed the regenerating work of our redemption.

From these few observations, you cannot fail to perceive, that it is God's will to have a solemn time, and fixed day in the week, wherein all the people professing his religion should come together, to celebrate the memory of his wonderful benefits to all his creatures, and to glorify him by grateful praises for the same, as becometh the dutiful and humble servants of so good and great a God.

This commandment was most regularly observed by all true christians, immediately after the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; when they made choice of a particular day of the week whereupon to worship God, and celebrate the blessing of their Redemption; yet, not on the *seventh* day, (as before observed) which the Jews still keep, but on the *next*, which is the *first* day of the week, and was called from that time, THE LORD'S DAY, because it was the day of our Savior's resurrection from the dead. And concerning this day, you will find St. Paul speaking as follows, in 1 Cor. xvi. 2. *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store*, meaning his charity for the poor. By this *first* day, he here marks the *Sunday*, which is the first day after the Jews seventh day; and in the Revelations of St. John, this time is still more clearly expressed, in the first chap. and 10th ver. *I was in the spirit on the Lord's day* (or Sunday); wherefore, from these early times, all sincere christians, without any dispute, and with the greatest exactness, have been ever accustomed

to assemble on the Sunday, to celebrate and honor the Lord's name, and most religiously to keep that holy day in rest and quietness, both man, woman, child, servant, and stranger. And to shew how highly offensive the breaking of this original commandment is to the Almighty, the Lord hath declared himself to be highly provoked at such wilful disobedience, as you may particularly see in the punishment of it, by *death*, in the xvth of Numbers; the man offending, in the instance there recorded, might possibly have offered many plausible excuses for his fault, as many are apt to do to this day, who have no true sense of the dreadful sin of disobedience. He might have alleged, for example, that it was an act of accidental necessity, or prudent foresight, and not a wilful indulgence of mere personal pleasure, or that it was but *arising* in *itself*, and confined entirely to his *own* conduct, so as not to involve any others in the crime; but you see the Lord considered it as an act of *rebellion*, not an insolent contempt of his most holy law, as an hurtful example to the people among whom he dwelt, and therefore sentenced him to be *stoned to death*, in order to convince the people how dangerous it was to provoke the Lord to anger. But, alas! notwithstanding this serious mark of God's displeasure, at the breaking of this commandment, it is truly grievous to observe, the sad thoughtfulness of *some*, and wicked boldness of *others*, who, thought they would be reckoned God's servants, and Christ's servants, do still esteem it a light matter to dishonour this holy day. Now these offenders are of two descriptions, and cannot be too earnestly urged to consider their error in this particular, lest the Lord should forsake them for their ungrateful provocations, and give them up to a reprobate mind; that is, to be indifferent about what so nearly concerns their eternal welfare, and grow still more hardened in the violation of God's laws.

The first sort of these people, if they have any business that remains undone in the preceding six days, though not of positive necessity, yet cannot prevail upon themselves to desist from the discharge of it even on the sabbath day. They think it a light matter to ride from home, and journey on the Lord's day; to drive their cattle in the public roads, and carry their goods from place to place, on that same holy day; or to accept, or contrive the most needless invitations; and many are so dead to the sense of any sin in thus profaning the appointments of the Most High, that they will even buy and sell on Sundays. In short, they use all days alike, making little or no difference between the days of lawful labour, and the sabbath of the Lord. They are so greedy of their time for worldly ends, that they will let nothing interfere to rob them of a few hours in the six days allotted them for the discharge of their respective callings, but grudge that small space of time to render thanks to his holy name, who hath set one day apart for that special purpose; from whom they receive all the good things they enjoy; to whom they are indebted for the particular blessing on their several occupations; in whom alone they live, and move, and have their being. They have foresight enough for every thing that relates to their temporal concerns, but none to prevent their falling into the sin of breaking the fourth commandment; foolishly blind and dead to this important truth, that all their care and pains are vain, if the Lord withhold his favor to their endeavors; that it is but lost labor when they haste to rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, if they are regardless of being in the number of his beloved; and above all, they seem quite insensible to this most serious truth, that though for the present, things may seem to go on smoothly, yet that God, sooner or later, will most surely punish for the wilful slighting of his

most wise, and merciful commandment. If people did but consider that *themselves*, their families, their property, and every thing most dear to them, are all in the hands of the Lord their God, they would judge by the highest wisdom to seek his favor, and the greatest madness and ingratitude, to provoke him. *And yet what say we to the other kind of people I mentioned as guilty of gross neglect respecting God's particular ordinances, are if possible, still more blameable than the former; for though many are averse from travelling, or working on the sabbath, in the manner they would upon another day of the week, yet cannot they be persuaded to rest in a holy manner, as God commandeth. They pass the day in the practice of various ungodly pursuits; according to their several evil inclinations, either in indecent mirth, or feeding their pride in dress, or in unlawful arts to render themselves admired, promoting thereby unprofitable, and dangerous gaiety of temper. Some are so ignorant, that they plead an excuse for staying from the public worship, because they are not so finely clothed, as sinful vanity would wish to gratify. They do not consider that it is the purity of the inside that God approves; an humble, and a contrite heart. He will in no wise cast out, though clothed in rags. He will not desert his faithful servants, because they happen to be less richly dressed than some of their brethren; and all such must be sensible, that one way to procure the necessary articles they may stand in need of, even in this respect, is to wait constantly upon Him, and sincerely and devoutly to call upon his name. Others abuse that repose enjoined them on this holy day, by excess, and superfluity of living; too often, by gluttony, and drunkenness, making themselves worse than the filthiest of the brute creation. They employ the rest that was appointed for the most pious purposes, in wrangling and fighting, in wanhopeful*

ton sports, or idle conversation; and in such indulgence frequently, of sensual lusts and appetites, that it is sadly evident, God is more dishonored by all such persons, and the devil better served upon the *Sunday*, than upon all the days of the week besides. So that one may truly say, the very *beasts*, (which, from the spirit of the commandment, are indulged with rest upon the sabbath day) carry an appearance of more reverence to the Great Creator, than people of the description above-mentioned.

Let these sad truths, awaken all backsliding and thoughtless christians, to lay their hands upon their hearts, when they are conscious of their transgressions, and to repent of, and amend this dangerous wickedness. Stand in awe of God's commandments, consider your ways in your own hearts, and sin not. Gratefully and joyfully follow the example of God himself; not continue in disobedience to the holy order of Christ's church, as appointed and kept by all his true disciples, from the time of the Apostles to this very day. Let a just fear of God's high displeasure, and the manifold plagues wherewith he can easily overtake you, prevent your being negligent of his laws, and guard you against the sins of travelling or working on the sabbath day; but whatever else is left undone, be not backward to come together, to celebrate and magnify God's most blessed name, in humble adoration and peaceful holiness.

The stated time for worshipping the Supreme, having been established fully, by *divine authority*, we proceed now to speak concerning the *PLACE* where people ought to come together, for that good purpose; that is, where particularly they ought to hallow and celebrate the sabbath day in *PUBLIC*. That place then is properly called the *temple* or *church*, because the company or congregation of God's true servants (which is also properly

called the *church*) do there assemble themselves on the days appointed for that solemn service: and because Almighty God has fixed upon a stated time whereon he chooseth to be honored, so is it very proper, holy, and likewise necessary, that there should be a *place* established, where the people should come together in order to join in serving their gracious God, and most merciful Father. It is true indeed, the holy patriarchs or first fathers, for a great number of years, had neither temple or church to go to, and the reason was, they stayed not long in any place, but were continually traveling through different countries, so that convenient opportunity did not offer to erect a settled church or place of worship; but as soon as God had delivered his people from their numerous enemies, and gave them a time of rest and freedom in the wilderness, he appointed them a costly and curious tabernacle, which served them as a parish church, or place wherein his sacrifices were to be offered up, and the other rites and ceremonies of his worship used. But when the Almighty, according to the everlasting truth of his promise, had quietly settled his people in the land of Canaan (now called Jewry) He, in his own appointed time, commanded a great and magnificent temple to be erected by king Solomon, such as rarely hath been seen; a temple so beautifully and richly ornamented, as was, in God's wisdom, proper for the character and disposition of the people at that time, who were apt to be attracted and pleased with nothing so much as with the outward splendor and gaiety of things. This then was the temple of God. The mother church of all Jewry. Herein was God honored and served. Hither was the whole realm of all the Israelites bound to come, there to serve the Lord their God. But it will concern our own case much nearer to proceed *now* to say something of christian churches. This
being

being a subject that occupies the minds of many amongst us, who think it matter of indifference whether there be an established church or not, and support their prejudices and mistakes upon the supposed authority of the earlielt times of christi-
anity. It must be readily granted, that in the time of Christ and his apostles, there were then no temples or churches, for christian people to resort to, as a seperate congregation. But why was this? Because they were always exposed to such persecutions, hindrance, and trouble, that they could obtain no liberty for that purpose, and not that they were careless about an established place of worship. Other reasons also might be advanced, to account why, in the very early state of christi-
anity, there were neither public temples or churches for the exercise of divine worship. The Apostles at the first propagation of Christ's religion, were dispersed in various parts, making converts to the faith, and forwarding their Master's kingdom upon earth: so that though the above impediments had not interfered, they could not conveniently have succeeded in erecting churches; and indeed an out-ward building was not necessary, till congregations were settled with power to attend and protect them. Besides, the *first* christians were so persecuted for the exercise of their faith, even in *private* duties, that a *general public* service could not, in the nature of things, have been established in haste, or answered any purpose, but to have increased and in-
flamed their enemies on all sides. Still, however, we are informed, that God delighted much that they should often *come together in one place*; and, therefore, after the ascension of our Lord, we read, that they remained together in an upper chamber, which then was large enough for their community. Sometimes they also entered the *temple*, sometimes they went into the *synagogues*, holding them *sacred*, as being dedicated to God, and used for his wor-
ship,

ship, (although not consecrated upon the principles of the *second covenant*); and never speaking against them, or depreciating them, as useless and unsanctified. Sometimes, indeed, from the cruel circumstances of their different persecutions, and in consequence of their pious zeal, they were obliged to worship God together in *prisons*, in their own houses and in the fields, but this (it is probable) continued only till the faith of Christ began to spread throughout many regions of the world; for when different kingdoms began to be established in Christ's true religion, and God had given the followers of his Son's gospel, both peace and rest; then kings, nobles, and nations were universally moved with a spirit of godly zeal to build them temples and churches, wherein the people might more conveniently assemble to do their duty to their Maker, and to keep holy the sabbath day, with open general consent. To these temples or churches, christians have been accustomed to repair, from time to time, as unto proper places, where, with one accord, they might praise and magnify God's holy name, yielding him thanks for the benefits he daily poureth upon them, so mercifully and abundantly, in various shapes and instances. Where they might also hear his blessed word read, explained, or preached sincerely, and enjoy the valuable benefit of having his holy sacraments duly and purely administered unto them. It is true, that the *chief* temple of God, wherein he taketh the greatest pleasure, and most delighteth to dwell, are the *body* and *mind* of pious christians, God's chosen flock; and this is upheld by the doctrine of St. Paul, *Know ye not* (saith he) *that ye be the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? The temple of God is holy, which ye are,* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; and again, with chap. ver. 19th, he saith, *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are*

not your own. But though all this is scripture, and the truth, yet doth God approve, and by his providence continue and bless the material temple built with hands; and as often as the people meet together *there*, to praise his holy Name, he acknowledgeth it to be his *house*, and the place where he hath set his name; where he hath promised to be present, and where he will hear the prayers of all who call upon him in sincerity, and humility of heart. Of this truth we have abundant proof by the testimony of *Christ*, his *Apostles*, and the holy *Fathers*; who notwithstanding they were assured that God will always hear the prayers of every faithful servant *where* or *whenever* offered up in *purity of spirit*, yet they failed not, at all convenient times, to pay their adoration in the *outward established* temple or place of worship of their country; that by joining in prayer with the rest of the congregation, they might afford authority by their constant practice, for the value and solemnity of such true and holy worship. It becometh *all* therefore, who profess to be true followers of *Christ*, and consequently glory in the blessed name of *christians*, to shew the utmost veneration for the *example* he has set them. *Faithful* disciples will ever be zealous to imitate their Master's pattern in *all things*, and to walk in the steps of their fellow soldiers in *Christ*, those exemplary leaders of christianity, the first apostles and disciples of the Holy *Jesus*. Fail not to lift up pure hands and clean hearts to the throne of grace at all proper seasons and occasions; but be not satisfied with this *glance*, since it has been clearly shewn you, that it is equally a duty of sound religion, to do the same in *public*, in God's established *church* or temple, according to the custom of our pious ancestors, and the communion in which we were brought up; and especially as such a holy practice secures the honor due unto the *sabbath* in the manner of God's *own* appointment.

pointments, and the original purpose of his public worship. And as from a grateful spirit of christian duty, the primitive fathers spared no expence in building churches, and even risked their lives in times of cruel persecution, to *defend* them, and employ them to God's service; surely *their example*, our *own duty*, and the singular *benefits* to be expected from a constant faithful use of them, should all unite to recover the shameful neglect which marks the present age, both in regard to attendance on God's house, and veneration for his holy sabbath. It is mere mockery to pretend to *belong to Christ*, to boast of the *value of our religion*, and to sound the praise of our *pious reformers* and *religious benefactors*, unless we willingly, earnestly, and devoutly strive to tread in their steps, and promote the honor of God's service by the most diligent attention to the manner of our lives and conversation. As members of an *established church*, this is the place we are expressly commanded to attend, wherein to pay our vows and worship to the Most High; in obedience to the laws of God, and our superiors in authority under him. Here we have the blessed opportunity of exercising holy thoughts and holy prayers, of weaning ourselves from worldly cares, of supplicating reconciliation to our Heavenly Father, through the merits and mediation of his Son, Jesus Christ. And in short, to be so established in a right faith and godly practice, that strengthened against all our enemies, and cultivating perfect charity with our neighbors, we may run the course of humble faithful christians here, and at last obtain the reward of everlasting life and happiness, through the merits and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

pointments, and the original purpose of his public worship. And as from a grateful spirit of christian duty, the primitive fathers spared no expense in building churches, and even risked their lives in times of cruel persecution, to defend them, and employ them to God's service; surely to us, who are our country, and the singular way to be expected from a constant faithful use of them, should all unite to recover the spiritual neglect which thickens the present age, both in regard to attendance on God's house, and veneration for his holy habitation. It is more necessary to pretend to delay in going to the house of the Father, and to find the praise of our own rewards, and rather to neglect, unless we willingly, earnestly, and devoutly strive to tread in their steps, and promote the honor of God's service by the most diligent attention to the manner of our lives and conversation. As men-bets for all established church, this is the place we are expressly commanded to attend, wherein to pay our vows and worship to the Most High; in obedience to the laws of God, and our superiors in authority under him. Here we have the blessed opportunity of exercising holy thoughts and holy prayers, of weaning ourselves from worldly cares, of supplying reconciliation to our Heavenly Father, through the merits and mediation of his Son, Jesus Christ. And in short, to be so established in right faith and goodly doctrine, that we may stand against all our enemies, and cultivating peace and unity with our neighbors, we may run the course of humble faithful christians here, and at last obtain the reward of everlasting life and happiness, through the merits and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

The second Part of the Homily upon the Place and Time
of Prayer.

NEHEMIAH xiii. Part of the 18th Verse.

Let ye bring more Wrath upon Israel, by profaning
the Sabbath.

IN the former part of this discourse, God's will
hath been most fully declared to you on the sub-
ject of keeping the sabbath day holy. The design
of this further instruction upon so important a
duty is, with God's blessing, to shew you, *first*, how
very desirous and regular you ought to be in keep-
ing this commandment, by suffering nothing but
positive necessity to interfere with your attendance
upon God's house or church, on the Lord's day.
And secondly, how sorely *displeased* God is with all
those who despise his law, by absenting themselves
from the public worship of his house at this ap-
pointed season of religious rest. This is fully
proved by the exhortations of Nehemiah, in the

words selected as a text for the second division of this discourse. *Did not your Fathers thus, and did not God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the sabbath.*

The Holy Scripture informs us very plainly, that many of the pious Israelites who were in captivity among the Babylonians, for the general sins of the nation, did often earnestly wish to return to Jerusalem. And we read also, that at their return, through God's great mercy and goodness towards them, though many of the people still continued negligent, yet the elders were wonderfully earnest in their zeal to rebuild the house of God, that the people might have a temple wherein to honor his holy Name. King David likewise, when he was banished from his own country, and the royal city of Jerusalem, from the sanctuary, and from the temple of God, expresseth the strongest desire towards that holy place. What prayers and supplications did he offer to God that he might be a dweller once more in the house of the Lord. *One thing* (saith he) *have I asked of the Lord, and that will I still beg,* (Psalm xxvii. 4.) *that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.* And again, (Psalm cxxii. 1.) *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.* And in other parts of his devout psalms, he sheweth clearly for what end he had expressed such fervent desire to enter into the temple or church of the Lord; namely, *That he might fall down and worship in his holy temple; that he might see God's power and glory, as he had seen it before in the sanctuary.* And to conclude his pious ejaculations, he saith, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.* (Psalm xxii. 22.) The reasons then, that are here advanced by the holy Psalmist, and which

which urged him to express such an earnest wish to enter into the house of God; were *first*, because he could there worship and honor his Maker with all the reverence and decorum due unto his holy service; or, as his own language intimates, *in the beauty of holiness*. And *secondly*, because *there* he justly expected to experience a suitable turn of thought towards the Majesty of Heaven, and an inward sight or sense of the great power and glory of God. And *thirdly*, because *there* he could enjoy the delightful satisfaction of praising the name of God with *all the congregation*, or company of the people. Now the considerations which animated this blessed prophet and servant of God, should raise in us a like fervent inclination constantly to resort to the service of the church, (especially on the high and holy day of general rest) *there* to discharge our bounden duty, and adore our Maker. *There* to be reminded how God out of his great mercy, and for the glory of his name, doth bless us with health, prosperity, and grace; and by his mighty power preserveth us from all the assaults and malice of our most cruel enemy: and therefore highly doth it concern us to meet together in his house, and join the number of his faithful people, in every possible act of becoming praise and honor to his Holy Name. And as a farther encouragement to this incumbent duty, let us call to mind the example of that ancient father Simeon, of whom the scripture speaketh thus, to raise in us a similar spirit of devotion. Luke ii. 25. *There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ; and he came by the spirit into the temple.* Observe here, that it was in the temple his promise to him was fulfilled; for in the temple he saw Christ,

and took him up in his arms : in the temple he broke out in worthy praise of God his Saviour. We read also of one Anna, a prophetess, who was of a great age, and to shew her veneration for the house of God is said not to have departed out of the temple day and night, by which is to be understood, her continual attendance on the public worship both morning and evening, she coming in about the same time, was likewise inspired to confess and speak of the Lord to all them that looked for the redemption of Israel. Thus you see this holy man and woman were not disappointed of extraordinary benefit and comfort, in consequence of their diligent attendance on the worship of God in his holy house.

Having supplied you with these valuable instances of the delight and profit to be expected from this godly practice, it may help your improvement and preserve you from transgressing, to be made acquainted with some particulars of God's heavy displeasure against those who set little store by the blessing of his holy temple, and who either ungratefully neglected or wickedly abused the same; and this was the second thing intended for your consideration at this time. Now nothing can afford a stronger proof of this, than the terrible plagues and punishments which God hath visited on his people, at different times : particularly in raising up their enemies and permitting them to prevail so far as at length utterly to destroy his holy temple, and bring perpetual desolation upon the stubborn and disobedient inhabitants of that land. It is truly grievous to consider how many churches, kingdoms, and christian communities, have been conquered, spoiled, and left desolate by the severe and oppressive tyranny of the Turkish nation, who have so frequently been suffered to punish christians in that part of the world ; and which affords a terrible

rible and alarming warning at the same time. Many years past this barbarous race had overthrown and reduced to their subjection no less than twenty christian states, turning the people from the faith of Christ, corrupting them with the false and impious religion of that wicked Impostor Mahomet, and either wholly destroying their churches, or profaning them with their abominable errors. And the same inveterate enemy to the christian profession; (this deadly instrument of God's anger) is ever ready to renew his hatred against christians to destroy their churches, and to bring them under his dominion. Doubtless *their* lukewarmness, or some ungrateful conduct towards the author of their faith, brought down this punishment upon their heads; and should furnish timely warning to *us* more constantly and earnestly to avail ourselves of the blessings God still vouchsafes to continue to *our* land, unworthy as we are. It should caution us never to slight the honor due unto his holy Name and house, but diligently to attend therein, that we may learn his blessed will, and obtain power faithfully to fulfil the same. For the arm of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot *punish*, as well as *save*; and from the miseries we daily see inflicted upon the enemies of all godliness, we may judge how dreadful a thing it is to fall into the hands of an angry God. For though he is long suffering, and of tender mercy, and that his great goodness is ever disposed to give the utmost *trial*, and leadeth to repentance;

• The same judgments of an offended God seem to be visited in a heavy degree upon several christian kingdoms and states at this very time. In consequence we may conclude, (among other graceless provocations) of the profanation of God's *holy ordinances*, and shutting their eyes against the light of his blessed Gospel. The instruments of this vengeance are an apostate people, lost to all sense of pure religion, and of course rendered capable of the most inhuman actions.

yet when provoked to begin the work of punishing the ungodly, he bringeth speedily to a fearful end.

The manner in which the Jews of old incurred the just vengeance of heaven against them, was, partly, by defiling the holy temple of God, with the detestable idolatries of their heathen neighbors, and also by superstitious vanities of their own invention, contrary to the command of God, and the purity of his service; and partly by coming to that holy place as *hypocrites*, while they were wholly given to all manner of wickedness, and sinful courses, *worshipping God with their lips, when their hearts were far from him.* While many, on the other hand, paid no respect at all to the holy temple, and were quite indifferent about attending it, And can we deny but that this is the case with numbers of our *own* church and nation? Have not many christian countries of later times, and even to the present day, most highly provoked the displeasure of the Almighty, by dishonoring and profaning their churches with the remains of heathenish and Jewish abuses? with images, and idols, with numbers of altars, which are most superstitiously served; as also by the gross and absurd corruption of the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord; by an infinite number of types and trifles of their own invention, merely to make an outward and enticing shew, and thereby disgracing the plain, pure, and sincere religion of Jesus Christ; and above all, by resorting to their churches, in foul hypocrisy of character, full of evil imaginations, and sinful lusts, being puffed up and deceived with the most vain and dangerous persuasions, that if they came within the *walls* of the building, besprinkle themselves with holy water, hear a mass, or service, from the priest, and are blessed with a sight of the chalice, in which the consecrated wine is held, though they understand not one word of the whole service,

service, nor perhaps feel one motion of *true repentance* in their heart, yet all is well, all is sure. Now though, through the gracious providence of God, vouchsafed to our particular church, and nation, we have been long freed from all these vanities, and hurtful errors, (and which will leave us less excusable, if we continue ungrateful for such distinguished mercy), yet all must confess, that many among us may, and *do*, provoke the Lord as highly, by a *mere formal devotion*, as by one so full of error*, as has been described; and that all such will receive as little benefit, by worshipping God in this poor manner, as the others do, through the grossness of their superstition. It is impossible not deeply to lament, the mockery and profanation of God's holy ordinances, as is here shewn to be the ignorant custom of some people. Churches were erected for a very *different* purpose, than merely *formal* worship. It was intended, that to them we should repair, with a *true christian spirit*; there to learn the truth of God's blessed will; to call upon his holy name; rightly to use the holy sacraments; to study and pray how to cherish true christian charity towards our neighbors; to be reminded of the wants of our needy fellow creatures; and to obtain grace to relieve their sufferings. In short, thither are we to go to be instructed how to depart thence with better hearts, and more godly dispositions than we are apt to *bring* with us; for, as before observed, God's anger is likely to be

* In the latter case, *ignorance* and *prejudice*, in the multitude, and their want of better light, may afford some plea with a God of mercy, who knoweth the heart, provided they are *sincere* in what they have been taught to profess; but to know *much*, and practice *little*, and neglect all the superior advantages of the purest instruction; this must necessarily subject the careless and ungrateful christian to the severity of chastisement, as threatened in the gospel, to them who do not profit by the means afforded them.

provoked by nothing more, than that wicked people make no conscience of daily deserting his holy house, where they might hope to be converted, if they duly employed the means there proffered to them; or on the other hand, when those who *do* come, are so blinded by the grossness of their hearts, and selfish principles, that they can understand nothing of God and true holiness, and are regardless of grieving the holy spirit, by continuing to give offence to their christian brethren, by their ungrateful and perverse example.

In the early days of our reformation from the useless fopperies of the Romish communion, many were disgusted from coming to church, because God's house was cleared of such vain and idle shews as greatly pleased the fancy of the weak and ignorant multitude. This was the effect of prejudice, and slavish custom; they saw the false part of the religion done away, and the true preserved, and this did not suit their vitiated taste. The truth of this is evident from a saying of a woman to her neighbor at that time of day: Alas! neighbor, what shall we do at church, now all the *saints* are taken away; now all the pleasing *sights* are gone, that so often were afforded us? since we no longer hear that *variety* of music and singing, that formed so great a part of the service of the church? This shews by what spirit the people in those days were so much influenced; *novelty, amusement, and outward shew*; and we should be careful that we do not follow them, by indulging a spirit as far removed from *purity* of religion, as that which they possessed in darker times. We should rejoice, and give God thanks, that our churches are happily cleansed of what we may be certain could never please him. He styles himself a *jealous* God, to shew that to him alone all praise is due; and that our supplications should never be divided between him and any of his creatures,

saints,

faints, or angels, and much less corrupted by their fancied images and relics. By these things God was sore displeased; by such practices his holy house, and place of prayer were shamefully defiled; for which he hath justly punished many nations, according as the measure of their iniquities was filled up, and agreeable to this propheticall sentence of St. Paul, *If any man defile the temple, him will God destroy.* For such deliverances it is impossible we can too highly magnify God's name; in that all such superstitious and idolatrous manners as are wholly vain and inconsistent with our Maker's glory, are now entirely abolished, as they ought to be; nor should we be less thankful, that the things by which his solemn worship may be advanced and honored, and the congregation edified, are decently preserved for those good ends, and still in common practised in our churches.

To conclude, as you must by this time be persuaded, that it is God's good pleasure that you should constantly and devoutly resort to your proper churches, upon this holy day of rest, and general religious exercise; as you cannot fail to see, by the sad conduct and fate of other nations, what displeasure your *absence*, or irreverent attendance must provoke; what heavy plagues and punishments the Lord, at different times, hath visited upon his disobedient people; as you must be sensible what outward blessings God will graciously bestow, and what heavenly and inward comforts are the reward of all who humbly observe this commandment of coming to God's house, and keeping the sabbath day holy; *even that blessed is the man that doeth it; and that him God will bring to his holy mountain, and make him joyful in his house of prayer:* And as you cannot deny but that all these exhortations hold out effectual encouragement to observe this duty, and that you are frequently and earnestly admonished

nished from this place, (nay in season and out of season, as the Apostle advises) to avoid the sure and dreadful consequence that ultimately must follow your neglect of it; it becomes most seriously necessary, that we should lay these things to heart. To be extremely careful of not falling off in the first, and most essential duty of humble christians, and dependant creatures; and that we suffer no wordly excuses whatever (which our busy and bitter enemy is always ready to multiply and present to us) to prevent our joining the congregation of our fellow christians, at all such times as are duly appointed, and commanded to be observed. Call to mind the instruction of our Blessed Savior, in the parable of the Marriage Supper. A great feast was prepared, guests were bidden, and many excused themselves, and would not come. The cares of the family, the business of the house, the various concerns or engagements of selfish desires kept them away, and inclined them ungratefully to refuse the invitation. *I tell you, saith Christ, not one of them that were called shall taste of my supper.* By this great supper, is represented the true religion of the Almighty God, by which he commands us to worship him, in duly receiving his holy sacraments, in sincerely preaching and hearing his blessed word, and practising the same by a suitable life and conversation. This feast is now prepared in God's banquetting house, the church; you are all thereto called and jointly bidden. If you refuse to come, and make your excuses, such, as in the error of your worldly hearts, you may think *sufficient*; the same answer will be justly given to you that was delivered to the rude, and graceless guests, whom the condescending king, in mercy, had invited, but who declined his favor. Consider for a moment only, how ready we are to accept the invitation of an *earthly* friend, especially a *superior*; how unworthy and senseless indeed it would be to refuse it,

it, when proffered for our advantage; how often we prefer such invitations, to the gracious calls of Him who would feast us with the bread of everlasting life, and reward us with inconceivable happiness? Consider and weigh well the sin and folly of preferring an earthly to an *heavenly* invitation, and you will not be liable to fall into this transgression. Come then, for the future, without fail; come cheerfully and gratefully, as behoves such friendless, helpless creatures. Enter God's house of *feasting* with joy and thankfulness, that ye may be made happy partakers of the many valuable benefits provided for you, and lest, finally, ye be condemned to the *house of mourning*. But be sure you come with a *wedding garment*, and not as the hypocrites. It is not your being *elegantly dressed*, but the *purity of your hearts*, that is signified in this figure of speech. Neither come from mere *custom*, or for *fashion* sake, but because you both *love* and *fear* God. Come not unwillingly, as if you would rather stay away, for forced prayers are no devotion. God loveth the cheerful giver of his *service*, as well as of his *alms*, and he hateth and punisheth all such false pretenders, who approach him with their lips, but in their hearts are far from him; who come for any part of the feast, rather than that which will most profit them, viz. The honor of being in his presence, and of being benefited by his word. The danger of coming on any other principle than that which is acceptable to the master of the feast, is evident from the very language of the parable before us: *Friend* (saith God, under the character of an earthly prince) *how camest thou here, not having on the wedding garment?* And for which presumption we read, that *he commanded his servants to bind him band and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*; that is, anguish of soul, despair and misery inconceivable!

And

And this most surely will be the lot of all who either wilfully absent themselves from the public worship of God's house, or profane it with unsanctified lips, and unbecoming manners. To the end then that ye may avoid this dreadful and unalterable sentence, keep in mind the wholesome admonitions which have been delivered to you at this time, in the language of our Church Homilies, on this important subject; above all things correct the wicked and dangerous habit of deserting God's house, and violating his holy sabbath, but pray to him most fervently to give you grace to approach him there at all times, in a *wedding garment*; that is with an humble, ready, holy disposition to honor and obey him; seeking God's glory in the *act*, in order that you may render an acceptable sacrifice of praise to him for all his goodness; that you may continue in his fear, and in peace and charity with all mankind: for charity or universal love, is the fulfilling of the law, and prepares us for the pure love of God, without which all else is mere *sound*, not substance. Remember that your very best works will never be pleasing in the sight of God, while you continue uncharitable towards your neighbor; that is, unless you have a true love of God himself upon your hearts, which qualifies for the discharge of every *other virtue*. In short, unless you forgive, as you hope to be forgiven by Him we all offend continually, and make every favorable allowance for one another, that becomes a weak and fallen race. Come then, with your hearts proved, and purified from every worldly affection, at least *desiring* that they may be so. Shake off every vain and foolish thought, that may interfere to spoil the holiness and humility of your christian service: and as the bird, when it would fly, shaketh and cleanseth her wings, so prepare yourselves to soar *higher* than the
swiftest

swiftest bird; that after you have performed your duty properly in this church or earthly temple, you may ascend on high, and be received into the glorious temple of God, in the heaven of heavens. Through the intercession and merits of Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and honor, and praise. Amen.

Of the Common Prayer and Sacraments.

Psalm. IV. part of 61. VERSE.

In duty of prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

AMONG the various religious exercises that a Christian should employ in his duty to God as his servant and fellow Christians, there are none more necessary and profitable for all conditions of men, at all times, and in all places, than the constant and humble use of public prayer, and the sacraments administered in Christ's church: for by the first, we attain God's grace to correct our tempers, the power to subdue our passions, and likewise the gift of every needful comfort in this life: and by the other, he adorns us with his household, or family, and setteth himself to us as our guardian to defend us from the snares of the evil one. Mark not then that who wastfully esteem both the one and the other, be strangely perverse and blind. Can such be truly said to be **DIS-**

God,

and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and honor, and
Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom with the Father
be all glory and honor, and
through the intercession and merits of
the Holy Spirit, be all glory and honor, and
you may stand on high, and be received into
his property in this church or earthly temple,
which is, that after you have performed your
duties, Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

On the Common Prayer and Sacraments.

PHIL. iv. part of 6th VERSE.

In every thing by prayer and supplications, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

AMONG the various religious exercises that should employ us as God's servants and fellow-Christians, there are none more necessary and profitable for all conditions of men, at all times, and in all places, than the constant and humble use of public prayer, and the sacraments administered in Christ's church; for by the *first*, we ask at God's hands all such things as otherwise we have no right to expect will be bestowed upon us, such as his grace to correct our tempers; the power to subdue our passions, and likewise the gift of every needful comfort in this life; and by the *other*, he accepteth us into his household, or family, and offereth himself to us as our guardian to defend us from the snares of the evil one. Must not they then who wilfully neglect both the one and the other, be strangely perverse and blind? Can such be truly said to belong to God,

God, or to be Christ's disciples? Was not the whole office of our Blessed Savior employed in bringing us to God? and if we turn our backs on the prayers offered in his Father's house, from any idle or ill-supported plea of our own selfish fancy, can we reasonably hope that he will accept our prayers *else where*? Will any person, pretending to a proficiency in religion, presume to say they *love Christ*, and that they wish to be benefited by his precious, blood-shedding, who are indifferent about being baptized in his name? regardless of seeing their children early initiated into his church, and of partaking of the memorials of that living sacrifice which he offered for weak and undeserving creatures; and yet how many are there who are very remiss in these particulars? Will any, having authority and influence over their poorer and ignorant brethren, neglect to enforce these positive duties, and at the same time affect to be zealous christians!—O vanity of vanities! fatal error! We must in *all* things follow Christ's example and commands, and not in a few of our own fond fancies only, or depend upon it we shall not be able finally to stand the test that will be required of us as his pure disciples. Since then no well informed christian can be at any loss to know how very necessary these holy exercises are to forward our salvation, as the *means* of grace, yet it may be highly profitable to those not equally well informed in religious knowledge, to give serious attention to the following enquiries:

First, What *prayer* is, and what a *sacrament* is, and *secondly*, how many *sorts* of prayer there are, and how many *real* sacraments. By a plain explanation of each question, you will (by God's blessing upon the endeavour) be better able to understand how to use them to your soul's health. One

of
and blind? Can such be truly said to believe in God?

of the ancient fathers of the church * gives us this account of these means of grace: These are his words concerning *prayer*, "Prayer is the devotion or application of the mind to God, or in other words, the turning towards the mighty author of our being, through a pious and humble affection, or disposition, and the ready desire of the soul towards him:" and in another work † he calleth the sacraments, *body signs*; and concerning the baptism of infants, he observes most judiciously, that if sacraments did not carry a plain resemblance, or likeness of the things whereof they are signs or pledges, they would *be no sacraments at all*; for generally speaking, they convey in their *names*, the nature of the things they *signify*; whence, from this father's sentiments, it is very clear that he alloweth the usual description of a sacrament, as specified in our excellent Church Catechism, viz. *That they are outward visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace*, meaning, tokens of such things, as place before our eyes and senses the inward working of God's free mercy, and which in a manner seal in our hearts the promises of God; and in this light Jewish circumcision (in the room of which christian baptism took place) was a sacrament which signified or declared to the outward senses, the inward circumcision or cleansing of the heart, and by that act of obedience to God's command, sealed and made sure in the hearts of the circumcised, the promises of God respecting the promised seed they looked for, even the Messiah, the Savior of the world; and in like manner baptism doth seal unto the faithful the gift of the grace of God, and regeneration of the creature.

* St. Augustine, in his Book concerning the Spirit or Soul of Man.

† His Book against the Enemies of the Law and the Prophets, in his Epistle to Boniface.

We will now proceed to consider how many *sorts* of prayer there are, and the just number of sacraments in Christ's church. In scripture we read of three kinds or descriptions of prayer, two of them of a private nature, and one common or public. The first is that of which St. Paul speaketh in his Epistle to Timothy, 1 Ep. iid. ch. 8th ver. and is thus expressed, *I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting**, which seems to imply the devout raising of the mind to God, without expressing aloud the sorrow or desire of the heart, by open voice. Of this sort of prayer we have an example in 1 Kings, in the case of Anna, the mother of Samuel, when, in the heaviness of her heart, she prayed in the temple, and besought the Lord to make her fruitful. She prayed in her heart, saith the text, but there was no voice heard; and it is in *this sense* of prayer that St. Paul exhorteth the Thessalonians (1 Eph. v. 17.) *To pray without ceasing*, not once or twice in a week, or now and then every day, but to lift up the heart often in secret to God: and the same meaning we may safely apply to St. James's assurance (in the vth chap. and 16th ver.) *That the fervent prayer of a righteous, or good man availeth much*, that is, the continual, humble, earnest, inward supplication to the supreme director of all events, to prosper the charitable desire of the heart for the good of our neighbour, or to accomplish in, or for ourselves, whatever may tend to God's glory.

The *second* kind of prayer, is that which is described by St. Matth. in the vith chap. and 6th ver. *When thou prayest*, saith he, *enter into thy closet*,

²⁰ * This, in respect to place, is spoken of *private* prayer only, and that merely *mental*, as appears from what follows in the Homily: these words of the apostle cannot therefore be construed as any encouragement to public prayer, and assembling, in *unhallowed places*,
and

and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly; that is, will grant thy requests if they be truly profitable for thee. Of this description of prayer we have several examples recorded in holy scripture; but one will be as useful as many. In the xth chap. of the Acts, we read that Cornelius a devout man, and captain in the Roman army, assured St. Peter, that being in his house, and at prayer at the ninth hour, there appeared to him a person in a white garment, who said unto him, thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God. And we must take with us this further character of this good man, that *he prayed to God alway*, that is, it was his never failing custom. Here then you have an account of *two kinds* of private prayer, the one *mental*, or that in which the *mind* is only employed, and the other that of the lips, disclosing either the trouble or desire of the soul by *words*, but still in some private chamber, or retired place.

The *third* kind of prayer is that which we properly call *public* or *common prayer*: and to this our Blessed Lord himself giveth sanction and value, when he saith, in the xviiiith chap. of St. Matth. and 20th ver. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*; for although God hath promised to hear us when we pray to him in *private*, if it be done in faith and true piety, as we are encouraged in the words of the 1th Psalm, *In the day of thy trouble, if thou wilt call upon me, I will hear thee*; and though of the *certainty* of this promise we have full proof in the case of Elias, who, though but a mere mortal, saith St. James, obtained by his prayers that the heavens should be shut for three years and six months; and again, upon his praying, he procured rain; yet the whole history of God's word declareth to us, that public or common prayer is most acceptable to

God of any other; and therefore melancholy is the observation, that it is so little valued among people who boast themselves in the name of *christians*; and against every soul who wilfully abstains from it, we may pronounce sorrow and woe, either in some period of their present life, or when they are called to an account for the just exercise of their christian duties, for against public prayer no persons whatever can advance any reasonable plea, unless they can shew that the word of God should not be read in public, or that our common prayer is not faithfully collected from it. But to prove that this important article of God's holy worship is upheld by scripture, and that it is our bounden service most strictly to attend it, it will be now proper to give you some examples from holy writ of the mighty efficacy of general or common prayer.

In the iiii. chapter of the book of Jonah we read that when God threatened, by the message of his prophet, to destroy the city of Nineveh in forty days, the prince and the people joined together in *public prayer* and fasting: and in consequence of their humiliation they were preserved. In the iiii. chap. of the prophet Joel, 16, 17. ver. it is also said, that God commanded a fast to be proclaimed, and the *people to be gathered together*, young and old, men and women; and that the priests, the ministers of the Lord, were to teach them to say with one voice, *Spare us, good Lord, spare thy people*: you cannot avoid perceiving that these are the very words of part of our excellent Liturgy; and in what place are we further told they were commanded to do it? why, *between the porch and the altar*; that is, in the body of the *public church*, in God's consecrated house; and there they were all commanded to unite in imploring God with one voice, that he would not give his heritage to reproach; or that they should not *be brought to confusion*; as the compilers of the Homilies translate

the text. Take further proof of the value of *public* prayer. When through the malice of the wicked Haman, as recorded in the ivth chap. of the book of Esther, the destruction of the whole Jewish people was meditated in one day: at the queen's command they betook themselves to *public* prayer, and were preserved. And we read; in the viiith chapter of Judith, when Holofernes besieged Bethulia, by the advice of this holy woman, the people fasted and prayed, and were delivered from the enemy. Again, the blessed effect of *public* prayer is also testified, in the xiiith chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; where we see that the Apostle St. Peter was delivered from prison, the Lord having heard the prayers of the congregation assembled to petition him, in his favor. By all these histories, it will hardly be doubted, by any faithful worshipper of God, but that *common* or *public* prayer is of great influence in obtaining favor and deliverance at the hands of our Almighty Father*, for which reason we cannot be too pressing in exhorting all men, by the tender mercies, and long suffering of God, not to be negligent, but as often as in their power, to repair to God's holy house, and to shew themselves a people depending upon his goodness for the gift of the many things they need, and which are so particularly mentioned, and devoutly asked, in the common prayer of the church, to which they profess to belong. Let us never deprive ourselves of the blessed opportunity, whenever we can seize it, of joining together in

* As these discourses are particularly published for the instruction and edification of my own parishioners; I cannot refrain a remark on this passage, viz. that we ought not to entertain a single doubt but that God was graciously pleased to hear the petitions of all the churches of this land, in behalf of the precious life of our Sovereign, who (after long and earnest supplication, by his subjects, of all denominations, to the throne of grace, for his recovery) was at length restored to his former health; and the blessing of his reign prolonged to his people.

imploring of our heavenly Father, for ourselves and each other, all those things, which in his wisdom he knoweth to be proper for us. It must be evident, however, notwithstanding all that has been advanced, to defend and promote the reverence that is due to the common prayers of the church, that the benefit of private devotion is in no degree lessened, but on the contrary, that it has been steadfastly maintained and recommended. In short, it behoves us to take especial care, in all these different exercises of prayer, that our minds be *duly prepared*, and our hearts devoutly *disposed* to God, or else we may be assured our prayers will answer no good end; and this indeed the lives and manners of the people will soon declare. We must beware, therefore, lest we deserve the censure of the prophet Isaiah, xxix. 13. *This people honoureth me with their LIPS, but their HEART is far from me.* And thus much may be sufficient for the present, concerning the value of these three sorts of prayer, as proved most needful for us, by the word of Holy Scripture.

The next part of our enquiry, relates to the *number of sacraments*, which were really instituted by Christ himself; which are consequently *proper* to be continued in the church, and the use of which it is incumbent upon *all* professing themselves *christians*, to acknowledge and receive, at stated times, for the purpose our Blessed Lord ordained them to be admitted in his church. As to *number* then, as these sacraments may be considered, according to the exact *meaning* of a sacrament, which must have such *visible signs*, as are expressly mentioned in the New Testament, and upon due application of which are promised the *free forgiveness* of sins, and our holiness and union in Christ; according to this description, I say, there certainly can be but two; and these are *Baptism* and the *Supper of the Lord*. For although the forgiveness of sin is promised

mised to *absolution*, yet this promise can no where be found in the words of the New Testament, as being added to the *visible sign*, which is the *laying on of hands*. For this *visible sign*, (attending *absolution*) is not expressly commanded in the New Testament, to be used in that office; and accordingly, we do not employ it in our church. But the *visible signs*, of *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*, are expressly commanded, and therefore *absolution* cannot claim the like authority with these two, for the true description of a sacrament. And as to the *ordination of ministers*, although that indeed hath a particular *sign* and *promise* attending it, yet it wants the promises of *remission of sin*, as do all the other sacraments, practised by the Church of Rome, and therefore they are *improperly* called *sacraments*; nor of course can be compared, in essence and value, to the sacraments of *baptism*, and the *Lord's supper*. In a *general sense* of the term indeed, which signifies an holy oath or engagement, the word *sacrament* may be applied to any ceremony, whereby a holy office is signified, and in which sense of the word, the ancient writers have given this name not only to the other five, (which have been commonly so called, and to make up the number of sacraments seven, as received in the Romish communion), but they applied it also to several *other* ceremonies; as to the use of *oil* with the sick, washing of feet, and the like; by no means intending to reckon them as *sacraments*, in the same sacred meaning as the two before mentioned sacraments are received. And this St. Austin renders very clear, in his third book of Christian Doctrine, and elsewhere. The same ancient father also asserteth, that the sacraments of christians, are not only most excellent in their signification, but are *few* in number: and in both these writings he maketh mention expressly of but *two*; the sacrament of baptism, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Although, therefore, by

order of our excellent church, the use of other rites and ceremonies are retained, such as the ordination of deacons and priests; the office of matrimony; the confirmation of children; (which consists in examining them as to their knowledge in the articles of their christian faith; and adding thereto the prayers of the church) as likewise the visitation of the sick; yet no man ought to receive them as *sacraments*, in that sense in which he considers the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, but only as holy offices, necessary to be employed in Christ's church, and therefore very worthy to be authorized and protected by the public ministry of the church, and admitted as such ordinances, as will contribute to the instruction, comfort, and edification of Christ's faithful servants.

You cannot now be at a loss to know what is meant by prayer and the sacraments; and as the several kinds of prayer have been explained to you, as likewise the true number of sacraments, according to our Savior Christ's *own institution*, it may not be an unprofitable information on this subject, to shew you further, that neither the scripture, nor the example of the first christian church, allow of public prayer, or any kind of sacrament, or public rite or ceremony, that is intended for the improvement of the unlearned congregation, to be ministered in any language, *not understood by the minister, and all the people*. Nay they forbid that any private person should use a vocal prayer in a language that he himself does not understand. As to *common prayer*, and the administration of the *sacraments*, sound reason, if we would attend to it, must quickly persuade any one of the propriety of having them in a tongue that is *understood of all*; because public prayer implies the asking something with our voice, and one *consent of mind*. Now the administering a sacrament, is by the outward word, and sign or element, to preach or declare

clare to the receiver the inward and invisible grace of God upon the heart. And, because both these holy exercises were purposely instituted, and commanded to be continued, in order that the congregation of Christ's servants might from time to time, be reminded of the necessity of their *union with Christ*, and that being all members of one body they ought, both in prayer and otherwise, to seek and desire one another's benefit, and not their own *separately*; it is therefore evident, that a weighty condemnation lies against all those who disdain to employ prayer in *this way*, since it is clearly contradicting the spirit of scripture, and the ordinances of the church. But there is nor the least necessity to have recourse to proofs or arguments in this case, because the plain and indisputable words of scripture, no less than the consent of the most learned and holy writers do advise, that the prayers of the congregation be offered in a *known tongue*; and while they are so, they are without excuse who abstain from them, but for very sufficient reason indeed. Sr. Paul (in 1 Cor. and xivth chapter) exhorteth that all things be done to *edifying*, which cannot be, unless public prayer, and the administration of sacraments, be performed in a language *understood by the people*; for otherwise they cannot possibly receive any comfort from them. For, as the Apostle applies the comparison, on this very subject, *If when the trumpet is blown to battle, it giveth an uncertain sound, who can prepare himself to the fight?* And if an instrument of music maketh no perfect note who can understand what is played? So when prayers or sacraments are administered in a tongue unknown to the hearers, or indeed in such *words* as are quite above their comprehension, (which in effect amounts to the same thing) who could be assisted thereby in lifting up his mind to God, to beg with the minister, at the hand of the Most High, those things which he asketh in his prayers,

prayers, or to understand what invisible grace is to be implored by the hearer, as needful to be wrought in the inward man? Truly, no one; for, as St. Paul saith, *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue shall be to the bearer as a barbarian*, or foreigner, which in a christian congregation, must be allowed a great absurdity.

We are not *strangers* to one another, but we are citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. We are members of one body; and therefore while our ministers are rehearsing the prayers that are offered in the name of us *all*, we must give diligent ear to the words spoken by them, and with our *hearts* beg of God those things which they pray for by *words*. And to prove that we do so, we say *Amen*, (or so let it be) at the end of the prayer thus put up in the behalf of the congregation.

A good argument why the common prayer should be made in a known tongue, or words easy to be understood, is drawn from the opinion of the Apostles themselves. For if it had at any time been allowable to use an unknown language in the congregation, it certainly might have been done with greater propriety, in the time of St. Paul, and the other Apostles, who were miraculously endowed with the gift of tongues; because that might have helped to persuade *some* to embrace the gospel, when they heard men who were born Hebrews, and unlearned likewise, yet speaking fluently the Greek, the Roman, and other languages. But St. Paul, we see, thought it not allowable even *then*, and much less would it be allowable *now*, when no one can obtain the knowledge of languages, but by long and close application*. And God forbid, that

* And the same argument will hold good against too often dwelling upon dark doctrines, and nice points of divinity, to an unlettered audience; or of using the more elegant form of speech, and

that in general we should follow any other way, as by so doing we should lower the value of all our church exercises into vain superstitions, and render them wholly useless. We read in St. Luke, that when St. Peter and St. John were discharged by the priests and officers at Jerusalem, they resorted to their companions, and related to them all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them; which when they heard, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, *Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, &c.* Acts iv. 23, 24. Which they could not have done, if they had praised God in a language that all the company did not understand; for doubtless they did not all speak at once with different tongues, but some *one* of them spake in the name of them *all*, and the rest giving diligent attention to his words, consented to the *meaning* of them; in which only sense it must be understood, that they *lift up their voice with one accord*. The Apostle doth not say their *voices*, as if all spake at once; but their voice, as of *one*. That one voice, therefore, must have been in a language they all understood, or they could not have been said to lift it up, or present it with the consent of their hearts; for no man can give his assent to that which he doth not comprehend. If we look back to the times *before* Christ, I believe no one will be found bold enough to assert, that either God's people, or any other, ever had their prayers, or religious rites and sacrifices administered in a language *unknown to the people*. And *since* our Blessed Savior's coming, we have no account of any thing of the kind till the undue power of Rome began to spread and

and hard terms of knowledge; all which, in a fair sense, may be termed speaking in an unknown tongue. Instead of which, plain practical rules, supported by the spirit of the gospel, and exhortations to apply to *him* for help, who is the bestower of every good gift; these are the most profitable lessons.

engaged

engaged all the nations of Europe to pay such respect to the ancient Roman language. In this, all the most learned and ancient writers agree; and that no unknown tongue was made use of in any congregation of christians. One of the fathers (Justin Martyr) who lived about one hundred and sixty years after Christ, speaks to this purpose concerning the administering of the Lord's Supper, in *his* time, (which is no less curious than instructing). "Upon the Lord's day, (says he) both the people that live in cities and in the country, assemble together, when a due portion of the writings of the Prophets and Apostles are publicly read; this ended, the chief minister maketh an exhortation or discourse upon the necessity of good works; or (as the *Homily* expresseth it) *to follow honest things*; after this, we all rise together, and offer up our prayers; which having done, bread and wine (and water) are brought forth, and the chief minister presenteth public prayers and thanksgivings, in the most solemn manner; and all the people answer Amen, to what he says." Now if we duly consider this account, it must plainly appear, that not only the scriptures were read in a known tongue, but that prayer also was made in the *same*, in the congregation, in this father's time. It is well known also, that some of the first fathers, (viz. Basil the great, and Chrysostom) did publish a form of public prayer, which they termed *liturgies*, (by which word *our* excellent form is called, and signifies the holy public work or service of the people,) and in these services they ordered, that the people should answer sometimes *amen*, to the prayers of the minister; and at other times, *Lord have mercy upon us,—and with thy Spirit*: or, *We lift up our hearts unto the Lord*, &c. All which, it must be almost needless to observe, are some of the very responses we use in our own church, and have wisely borrowed from those purest times of christianity. Now it

is very evident the people could not have made those answers when they ought, if the minister had prayed in a language entirely strange to them.

Enough has been advanced at this time, to convince all people of the great necessity and benefit of prayer in general, and especially of public or common prayer. Nor can any one avoid seeing from what has been observed, on the impropriety and absurdity of speaking to a congregation in a language they do not understand, how much we are indebted to Almighty God, by whose good providence we enjoy the great blessing of a reformation from that church, wherein such an unreasonable, and unprofitable practice was, and is still constantly employed; which offereth public prayer in a tongue unknown to any but the priest; and it is to be feared, not always *completely* by *himself*. Most humble and hearty praise is therefore due to God, for all his gracious blessings bestowed upon us, his unworthy servants; and among which none can be greater, than the happy means afforded in our praying to him in words of sober truth, and *scriptural form*; of magnifying his holy name with *one accord*; and so worshipping him every time we meet together, that we may safely and profitably say, *Amen*, (or so, good Lord, let it be) to all we ask or pray for, in the name of Jesus Christ, thy only Son our Lord. To whom, &c.

N. B. The remaining part of this Homily is omitted, as containing nothing materially new; but only a further vindication of the same subject by repeating much the same arguments, and illustrating them with other texts of scripture.

DISCOURSE IV.

*An instructive Exhortation to such as have been prejudiced
against particular Passages of Holy Scripture.*

PART THE FIRST.

2 PETER iii. latter part of the 16th verse.

*They which are unlearned and unstable, wrest
these, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own de-
struction.*

OF all the means appointed by Almighty God
for the instruction and improvement of his
creatures, the Holy Scriptures supply the most va-
luable method of forwarding the eternal welfare of
mankind. But even *these* have been occasionally
excepted to, by the thoughtless and the wicked.
The purport of this discourse is to set forth their
true value, to point out some common objections
of weak and worldly men, and to clear some parti-
cular passages from any hurtful meaning. In truth,
the great benefit the Holy Scriptures are calculated
to convey to us, must be confessed by all who hear
or read them, with a suitable disposition for that
holy study. As they are the words of inspiration,
so do they speak to the *spirit*; and that comfort
which these treasures of wisdom communicate to
the

the pious soul, as it surpasses all carnal conception, neither is it to be expressed by human language. But the blessed fountain is open for *all* to taste; and they who are athirst for living water, are invited to repair to this unadulterated source of substantial delight and consolation.

Now as nothing can be more certain, than that the scriptures direct to the surest way of bringing us to the saving knowledge of God, and the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ our Lord; it is consequently the interest of our bitter enemy, to endeavour all he can, to remove so powerful an engine against the furtherance of his kingdom. And well knowing the virtue of these divine treasures, to qualify us for a better inheritance, by securing us from the mischief of *his devices*, he is in nothing more industrious, than in his endeavours to deprive us of such powerful assistance, or at least to corrupt the channel from whence our remedy and strength proceed.

To this end he has always been busy to stir up in the minds of cruel tyrants and oppressors, and such as have no fear of God before their eyes, a desire to assist his hatred towards God and man, by opposing the progress of the everlasting truth communicated in God's most holy word. And availing himself of the power and false pretensions of sinful men, he hath often effected the destruction of the records of sacred knowledge, in many places and at different times; pretending with slanderous falsehood, that hurtful errors and a dangerous thirst of liberty, were the only effects of such indulgence; and that thereby the peace and order of good government were endangered.

Now we who are blessed in the possession of the oracles of truth, can readily *contradict* this *falsehood*; and safely affirm, that the knowledge of God and ourselves, is so far from yielding any encouragement to do wrong, that it is the surest and only method

method to curb all licentious liberty, and to subdue the principles of disorder, and every turbulent affection of the mind. And here it is difficult to decide which is most evident, the falsehood or subtlety of the deceiver: since, if the general study of scripture inclined to inflame the minds of men, and produce more mischief in the world, as Satan is the father of wickedness; it would be manifestly to the advancement of his kingdom, to preserve, instead of *crushing*, so choice an instrument for his own purpose. But the contrary being the *truth*, is the direct way of acquiring the wholesome knowledge of all that is good, is by humble diligence to hear and read the sacred volume: for as all scripture is given by the inspiration of God, so no christian can expect to obtain a purer acquaintance with his Maker and himself, in any other writings than those most graciously designed by the Almighty Parent of all things, *for this very end: for the scripture* (as St. Peter observes, 2 Ep. i. 20, 21.) *is not of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time, by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* And it is this spirit of truth, who (as our blessed Savior speaks) John xvi. 13. *will guide us into all truth, and shew us things to come.*

Whosoever, therefore, doth not partake of the influence of this guide, let his virtuous pretences be ever so fair, let his human learning be ever so deep, or his love of *truth* ever so ardent: nay, however he may be respected among men, as a sincere and steady *favorer* of it, he must inevitably fall short in the *discovery* of it, unless he applies to the *spirit* of truth to direct him. Let us only inquire then, what is it that seems to all reasonable men, as the most desirable *means* of preserving us from all error, but a true description of an upright life; that is, such a blameless character as may be approved by *God himself*. Now such a one, the holy

scripture presents to us, in the blessed person of Jesus Christ, whose doctrine and example are therein so plainly and forcibly represented, that by the advantage of this perfect pattern, we should frame our lives as near as possible to the author of all perfection. That this was the end of the pattern, and that it is our duty so to do, the Apostle expressly declares (1 Cor. xi. 1.) in these words, *Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ.* And St. John asserts, (in 1 Ep. ii. 6.) *He that saith he abideth in him, ought also himself so to walk as he walked.* Now how should we have been ever acquainted with the spotless course of Christ's life, but through the knowledge of the scriptures?

Again: If the wisest and best of men acknowledge, that in an imperfect body that presses down the soul, some sovereign remedy for a mind thus subjected to doubts and fears, through the infirmity of the flesh, is a relief devoutly to be wished: where shall we ever find such effectual consolation, such strong assurance that all our tears shall be dried up, as are afforded in the great and precious promises of the Gospel? Have we not Christ's word for it? *Search the scriptures,* (says he to the Jews) *for in them ye think (that is, ye are persuaded) ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.* It is certain therefore, from his assurance, who is the truth, the light, and the life, that they contain a sovereign cure for every scruple concerning our immortal state. If we desire heavenly wisdom, surely we can apply to no one so capable of enriching our minds, as to the *giver of all wisdom, who dealeth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.* Can we desire it more purely than from the mouth of Christ himself? Since, according to his promise of being with his servants to the end of time, he doth fulfil that promise most effectually, in speaking to us by the scriptures. He is not only present with us by his grace and constant loving mercy, that

upholdeth us, but to the great and endless comfort of *all* who have any desire of searching after God. He doth now more profitably address us in the history of his holy life, than he did by actual speech, the carnal-minded Jews, when *living* with them upon *earth*. For they alas! could neither *hear* nor *see* the things, of which we shall never fail to be assured, provided we seek them with *those ears and eyes*, by which the Divine counsels can be discovered; and what are they? Devout attention in reading and hearing the holy scripture, and a *lively faith* in Christ's *healing promises*.

And now, let us only judge of the perverseness of human nature, and how blind it is to its own best interests. If the bare print of our Savior's foot-steps could any where be ascertained, doubtless numbers would be induced to fall down and worship it; but to the holy Scripture, the words of his mouth, wherein not only the traces of his journey are recorded, but the most lively image of his person, and the power of his divine spirit are still preserved in entire vigor. To these, how few pay any due respect, and of those who *do*, how disproportioned is their reverence to the value of the legacy?

Again; could the seamless coat of Christ be actually produced, how would the weak, and superstitious multitude, throng to behold the garment of his blessed person? how eager, probably, to embrace it? but not all the relics of his human dress could equally convey to us that notion of his excellence, which the *scriptures* give. If men, from a vain, unprofitable love of Christ, do heap up images of his human form, and even adorn them with most costly ornaments, should not we be much more earnest in honoring those holy books, which *show* us Christ so *truly*? *Pictures*, and *images*, at best, can only represent the *earthly* body to us, but the scriptures do *so* paint Christ, that we acknowledge *God in man* to our eternal

comfort. We may behold him *speaking* to, and healing our *infirmities*; dying for our *sins*, and rising for our acceptance with his Father. In short, the language of the gospel, does so *perfectly* present unto us the very Savior of the world, that we may *see*, and confess him with the eye of *faith*, more essentially to our good, than otherwise it would profit us to behold him *now* before us with our bodily sight.

And as no christian will deny this; so it is manifestly of the greatest moment, to every individual member of Christ's church, both old and young, most earnestly and *constantly* to study these valuable records of all-saving truth; that at length we may be changed by their godly precepts and examples, into better christians; for they contain whatever is necessary for the faith and practice of all true believers, and the promise of a blessed inheritance of everlasting life and glory.

From what has already been said, you will be enabled to collect *some* of the advantages to be derived from reading and hearing those holy books; for, as before observed, it is impossible to express them *all*, and *justly*. Now, though nothing can be clearer, than the truths our Blessed Lord asserts himself, in St. Matthew xxii. that the ignorance of the holy scriptures is the foundation of every pernicious error; for, as he said to the Sadducees, *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures*; and as such kind of error must consequently prevent men from arriving at the knowledge of God, which only is the way to life eternal; yet are there *some*, who have conceived a very mistaken notion concerning the use of the scriptures; supposing, most unjustly, that many passages being above the level of ordinary capacities, they might become a *stumbling block*, or *occasion of offence* to the ignorant, or unenlightened reader; and the reasons they have advanced are these: First, that in some parts of scripture, the
meaning

meaning is conveyed in a too coarse, and plain expression, ill suited to the delicate and refined ideas of modern wits, whose exception to the language, discourages their attending to the spirit of the writings. Secondly; they object, that in these books, we have examples of the most gross transgressions, even in some men who were eminently distinguished by the title of *God's favorites*; that several of their actions were contrary to the law of nature, public faith, and even the most positive commandment of God himself; and therefore, to such as have not leisure or ability to attend to the progress of their history, or to distinguish and reason upon the opposite principles that actuated their conduct at different times; or to perceive the unerring direction of providence, in using these instruments to the purposes of his own wise designs. To persons of *this cast*, particular passages are apt to create disgust, and not only cause them to think unfavorably of scripture in general, but even to question its authority. Some find it hard to reconcile the seeming and contradictory cruelty of the outward rites and sacrifices of the law, with the principles of justice and mercy; and others, who are governed entirely by the spirit of the world, take great offence at the plainness of many of the gospel precepts. They cannot allow it consistent with the rules of just government, that a man should turn his right cheek to him, who struck him upon the left, or that it is advisable to offer our cloak to the person who would deprive us of our coat. Against all such exalted instances of Christ-like disinterestedness, they make exceptions. And lastly, an argument of in-

* Such shallow cavillers might as reasonably object (in point of cruelty) to the slaughter of the animal creation for one use, as for another; since, after the religious end or representation of the sacrifice was answered, the bodies of the beasts were served up for the food of men, as they are now, though no longer previously employed to more holy purposes.

vincible force is supposed to lay against *that* portion of the gospel counsel, which seems to discourage care and foresight concerning this world's goods; an error they treat with *ridicule*, and as exhibiting a great deficiency of sterling wisdom.

Now the cause of these several objections is very clear, for a *mere worldly spirit* being necessarily *at enmity with God*, and not *capable* of perceiving the things of God's spirit, will naturally find fault with such precepts as are founded on the essence of *perfection*; but when once men have a right understanding of the pure *interest* of these precepts, they will then find them no ways injurious to any worldly government, or their own, but comforts and advantages.

To remove these several pretended causes of offence, being the principal design of this discourse, we must endeavour to give a regular and satisfactory reply to each objection. In order then that instruction may accompany your attention to these points, let us consider some of the passages which unthinking or profane persons object to, on account of too great simplicity, or grossness in their expressions, and at the same time their proper meaning shall be explained. First, There is a passage in the xxvth chap. of Deut, 5th ver. which has afforded a plea with persons of the above description for needless criticism. It seemed good to the wisdom of God, to deliver a law to his people, (as recorded in this chapter) that if a man died without issue, his brother, or next kinsman, should marry the widow, and that the first born of the marriage should succeed, in the name of the former husband; and this was done that *the dead man's name be not put out of Israel*, that is, that his family *should be kept up*: and it was likewise ordered by this same law, that in case of the next kinsman's *refusal*, the widow should then, in the presence of the magistrate, shew public signs of her *contempt* for him:

him: these are particularly related in the chapter, and one of them was very expressive of his punishment for unwillingness to continue the succession of his family, according to the positive law of his nation, *for by loosing his shoe from his foot*, was represented his unworthiness of any *sound establishment* of his name among his people; and it remained a mark of disgrace to him, and his name for ever. By this ceremony, the woman was cleared from the fault, and the whole guilt of breaking God's law was deservedly thrown upon the man that refused compliance with it.

Further: Various are the silly exceptions of those vain triflers, who are offended at *words*, without giving themselves time to consider their *meaning*; and that nothing is more usual, in the communicating of all knowledge, than to convey the spirit of an expression under a very *common figure of speech*. Then, in the lxxvth Psalm, 10th verse, David saith, *he will cut off the horns of the wicked, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted*. Here the figure, or sign of a *horn*, is used to signify, as it generally doth in scripture, *power, or strength, rule, and government*. By breaking the horn of the ungodly therefore, the prophet shews, that he will not only weaken, but at length entirely destroy the present might of God's enemies; though, for the *trial* of his people, the Lord may suffer them to have the upper hand for a season. And as every good governor should do, he therefore determines to break the power of triumphal wickedness, and to encourage that righteousness which exalteth a nation. Again; in the cxxxiiid Psalm, the *horn* of David is used as a figure to denote his *kingdom*, which God declared should flourish, or branch forth in Jerusalem; of whom there should be a constant succession, like the *budding of horns*. And when the scepter had departed from Judah, then should the Messiah himself appear, *that horn of sal-*

vation to be raised up in the house of David! that branch of
Jehovah, which should bud into beauty and glory upon
earth. All then that this figure plainly conveys is,
 that God hereby expresseth, by a common sign,
 his purpose of giving *David* the victory over all his
enemies; and thus, according to the received man-
 ner of speaking and writing at different times, and
 in different countries, it is usual to convey public
 instruction under the figures of common and ex-
 pressive forms of speech, which when duly weighed,
 and interpreted, exhibit beauty and force, instead of
 any just ground for *ridicule*, or *censure*. And it is
 for want of discrete consideration, that ignorant
 disputers have sometimes taken offence also at these
 plain expressions in the 1xth Psalm, 8th verse.
Moab is my wash-pot, over Edom will I cast out my
shoe; which are mere metaphors, or figures of
 speech, to describe how graciously God has dealt
 with his own people, in making these nations so
 very *subject* to their power; for by these words of
humiliation, he intends to shew, that proud and
 powerful as the Moabites and Edomites *had been*,
 they should be reduced to the *lowest* degree of *ser-*
vitude; nay, so much degraded, that they should
 stoop down to *pull off the shoes* of their conquerors,
 and wash their feet, as was the custom of slaves;
 and the usual manner of speaking among the
 Hebrews, to denote a state of the greatest *humi-*
liation. It little becometh *Christians*, therefore,
 to except against such phrases as the thoughts of
 their own evil hearts alone can render faulty. It is
 enough, that they are employed in *holy writ*; the

* Plainness of speech is the general character of all primitive
 times. It is a mark of simplicity, and innocence of manners; and
 daily experience shews us, that under an hypocritical refinement,
 and by those who seem shocked at particular words, the filthiest
secret imaginations are too often indulged, and the foulest practices
 softened, and rendered more familiar.

purity

purity of the *design* is abundantly warranted, by the perfection of the *Divine Author*.

Great exceptions are also frequently advanced, by the profane, against the conduct of the primitive fathers, respecting their having more wives than one, and the keeping of concubines. In order, then, to rescue them from any *vicious* conduct in this respect, two things are proper to be considered: First, that in the early ages of the world, the patriarchs, or first fathers of the covenant, might be allowed this liberty for the purpose of increasing and spreading the generations of the earth, and not as any indulgence of an unlawful passion. Secondly, the word *concubine*, in scripture, does not convey the sinful sense in which it is used at *present*; for these concubines were lawful wives, only with this distinction, that the *first* wife, or mistress of the house, was a *free woman*, and had an interest in her husband's *property*; the others were *bond women*, or servants. They had no power over the family, but were in subjection to the mother of the household. They were in general (though not always), given to them on the day of marriage: thus Laban gave Zilpah to his daughter Leah, and Bilha to his daughter Rachel: Thus also did Pharaoh give the Egyptian Agar to Sarah, Abraham's wife; and these were all occasionally given in marriage to their different husbands. What, therefore, might be permitted at a *particular period*, in the *secondary* order of things, and for *extraordinary purposes*, and which could not be otherwise effected without *miraculous power*; but also in due time was *discontinued*, and by the *casting off* the *whole people*, was necessarily *abolished*, (God's prophecies and promises having been all fulfilled in Abraham's seed, and David's family.) Such a custom, I say, can hold no warrantable *precedent* for the licentious liberties of *vicious men*, since the gospel of Christ has *wholly superceded* the laws and customs

customs of the Jews, even *supposing* such a practice had been continued to the very coming of Christ. Nor can the usage of some of the first patriarchs be a proper object of future example in this respect, since the same *causes* cannot possibly hold good in *our* day; and much less does a partial permission of divine wisdom afford sufficient ground for censure, by weak and vicious mortals, who only reason upon principles of *sinful indulgence*.

But there are *other* instances of occasional failings and grievous immoralities in the conduct of some of the most celebrated characters of the Old Testament, even of men eminent for a considerable degree of *righteousness* and *faith*. These are often brought forward by our objectors. Noah and Lot are mentioned as being guilty of actions which disgrace human nature. Abraham likewise, who was even styled the father of the faithful, by God himself; Jacob, so peculiarly favored by the Almighty; David, the man after God's own heart, (as to his general conduct of *humility*, *obedience*, and *confidence* towards the Most High) and Solomon his son, whom the Lord so highly distinguished by the gift of wisdom; all these offended in some of the articles alluded to, which are plainly forbidden in the revealed law of God by Christ, and which are doubtless inconsistent with all sense of decency.

These, and such like faults in otherwise holy men, supply matter of difficulty and offence to the *vain disputers of this world*, who pretend they cannot reconcile these things with reason and propriety; and as St. Peter observes in the text, *wresting the scriptures to their own destruction*, they profanely take occasion from such like passages, to raise a plea for *wilful error* and *transgression*. The state of such men being most deplorable, let us now see what profitable lessons may be drawn from considering even the specks of *infirmity* and *negligence* in these otherwise

holy

holy characters, and through which they fell into such scandalous trespasses.

I need hardly mention, how lost *they* must be to any true respect for God's most holy word, who can for one moment suppose, that these things are recorded there to countenance any sinful act or course of vice, much less to encourage us to think that God will overlook the wilful sins of men. We may be well assured, the different transgressions of his servants were truly offensive in his sight; and by a diligent study of their respective histories, we shall find their sins most severely punished, either in their *own persons*, or in those of their unrepenting *posterity*, during some time or other of their earthly sojourning*. But their example (grievous as it is in some respects) may yet produce much valuable improvement to the *humble christian*; for we are hereby taught a thorough sense of our *frail state by nature*; herein we see the necessity of *humility and precaution*. By these foul steps in men, who at other times evinced such singular marks of the power of God upon their hearts, who truly lived in the *love and fear* of the Most High, let us take warning; *Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*. We hence learn, what the best of men may do, if they depend too much on their *own strength*; if they do not look up *constantly* to that hand which alone is mighty to save them from the assaults of the enemy. If they who were so highly favored by God's preference, did yet *occasionally*

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* They who read the scriptures with an humble desire to *profit*, instead of a disposition to *object*, will discover that even from these gross delinquencies many excellent admonitions may be collected; for example, in the cases of *Noah* and *Lor*, we see that even an *accidental* intemperance reduces the very best of men to a level with beasts, as it deprives them of the guards of reason and grace, and exposes them to the dominion of lawless brutal appetites. In the conduct of two of *Noah's sons*, we see the great value of *modesty*, and God's regard for it; as also his abhorrence of the *contrary*, by the future punishment of the offending party.

commit such dangerous sins, as without the especial mercy of God must have subjected them to *everlasting punishment*; how greatly doth it concern such *faible, sinful, and daily* offending creatures, (who can afford no signs of God's peculiar favor by any *extraordinary* service or obedience to his Majesty) how much, I say, doth it behove *such* continually to fear, lest they not only fall into the crimes which the others committed, but lest they grow *quite dead in trespasses and sins*, and all manner of ungodliness, which *they were not*. Thus, by considering that the best are liable to fall, we should be led to confess our own great *weakness* and natural disposition to *offend*, and shall consequently feel the necessity of daily calling upon God in prayer, for grace to strengthen and defend us from the power of the tempter; that when, through human frailty, we happen to be hurried into the commission of any sin, we may yet by *true repentance* and humble faith, be enabled to rise again, (as doubtless these primitive fathers did) and not continue and grow in sin as the *wicked* do.

This then is our duty and our wisdom, in hearing and studying the scripture; not to take offence at every thing that may happen to *surprise* our *ignorance*, or be too hard for our understanding, either in *expression* or *application*. And respecting the objectionable conduct of *some* characters, we should take warning by the failings of *other* people, thereby to establish our own faith and practice; to resolve dark passages into the obscurity that may proceed from imperfect translations, ignorance of ancient customs, and the changes of times and manners in men and things. Not to be disgusted at plain or uncouth phrases, because they do not exactly agree with the refined language and expressions of *modern days*, but humbly and charitably to conclude, that their meaning in the *times*, and by the *persons* they were *used*, had nothing *improper* or *offensive* in it; and

and that most likely, the levity or depravity of our *own minds*, may give a loose construction, which in more honest and innocent ages could *never* have been *affixed* to them*. In short, we should be careful ever to keep in mind, that whatever is recorded in holy scripture, has passed the sanction of DIVINE PERMISSION, that (God ordered all *holy scripture to be written for our learning, and not for our censure*); and therefore we cannot be too cautious, lest by coming to this fountain of all true wisdom with a spirit of vain and impure disputation, this rich feast of instruction be turned into a *snare* and a *stumbling block*; and that by weighing it only by the measure of our own shallow understanding, it should be suffered to become a *hurt*, instead of a *benefit* to us. On the contrary, let us so read, mark, learn, and pray for grace to *digest* these precious treasures *inwardly*, that we fail not of the certain and salutary food they are calculated to convey, both to strengthen, comfort, and instruct us (according to God's merciful design) in all the profitable works of our salvation; by such an humble, careful study of the sacred volume, we shall become thoroughly instructed in the discharge of every good work to the glory of God and the welfare of our own souls. God grant us all this grace, as often as we apply to these living oracles, through the merits and for the sake of HIM who hath redeemed us—even our Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

* The forming false and unworthy constructions of Holy Writ, doth also prove the great value of competent learning of various kinds; to understand the phraseology of Scripture in the original languages; which if the objectors possessed but in a moderate degree, they would be ashamed of their superficial and profane remarks, which are founded as much in *ignorance* as *levity of mind*.

and that most likely the levy of a penny of our
 community may give a local constitution, which in
 more honest and innocent ages could never have been
 offered to them. In short, we should be careful
 ever to keep in mind, that whatever is recorded in
 holy scripture has passed the sanction of divine
 permission: that God ordered all his servants to
 be obedient to his laws, and not for our laws;
 and therefore we cannot be too cautious lest by
 coming to this fountain of all true wisdom with a
 spirit of vain and impure ambition, this rich
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 deemed us—our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus
 Christ: To whom, with the Father and the Holy
 Spirit, be all honour and glory for ever and ever.
 Amen.

The foregoing table and map, the construction of which
 both also prove the great value of comparative learning of various
 kinds, to establish the philosophy of sciences in a regular
 language; with the objects pointed out in a methodical
 style, and the manner of his instruction and practice
 which are intended to be in a manner as follows.

DISCOURSE V.

Second Part of the Homily on the same Subject.

Same Text.

YOU have already been fully shewn, the many and great blessings and benefits derived to mankind by the knowledge of the holy scriptures. The attempts of profane and ignorant disputers, either to ridicule certain passages, or to undervalue the general authority of scripture, have likewise been equally exposed, by such plain and sufficient reasons, as discover the great folly and wickedness of such endeavours. The arguments advanced in the former discourse, related chiefly to particular passages of the *Old Testament*. In order therefore to afford a still more complete view of the false wisdom of these profane wits, we will proceed to consider the objections that they have also made to certain parts of the *New Testament*; and by a fair and pious explanation of these passages, you will be able to judge of the weakness of their reasoning, and religious principles, at the same time.

Some shallow disputers have most absurdly affirmed, that several of our Blessed Savior's precepts seem to oppose the very end of regular government. Such as these; *If any man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any* man

man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. If thine eye, thine hand, or foot offend thee, cut either of them off, and cast them from thee. And they equally object to some of St. Paul's maxims, to the same effect. If thine enemy, saith he, be an hungry give him meat, if he be thirsty give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt reap coals of fire upon his head, Rom. xii. 20. These, and such like expressions, to inconsiderate and hasty readers; to those who judge only by the measure of the *selfish principle*, and natural mind, may appear to have difficulties and contradictions, which really do not exist, when tried by the pure standard of christian principle, as we shall now proceed to convince you, by a fair and consistent exposition of them. Nor is it at all extraordinary, that they should appear unreasonable to the mere *natural man*; because, as the Apostle observes, *the natural man*, (that is, the man wholly absorbed by the interests of this life, as they affect his carnal nature) cannot understand the things of God, because they are to be *spiritually* discerned; and he must therefore partake of a different spirit or disposition (than that which was spoilt by a degenerated nature) before he can sufficiently enter into the truth and value of scriptural precepts. As to the *first* objectionable rule, they who have duly attended to the general manner of our Lord's instructing the people, will find that he frequently makes use of very *strong figures* and *comparisons*, to describe and recommend the *importance* of their several duties. The case before us, is one particular proof of it; it being a proverbial manner of expression, to signify most forcibly a *meek submission* to all injuries and affronts, even according to the positive example that Christ set them *himself*, and thereby to point out, that where the damage of any ill usage is not *great*, it is more adviseable to *suffer* it, and pass it by, (though even on that
very

very account, it might possibly be *repeated*) than to enter into a hazardous and severe prosecution of the offender; since, in a *christian light*, this might inflame the passions of *revenge*, and the desire of returning *evil for evil*. Even in a *prudent light*, it might be safer to desist; since it might cost more to get *justice*, than any satisfaction for such an injury would be worth. And our Blessed Lord knew well, that those to whom he was discoursing would understand the *force* of his expression, because it is written in the book of their prophet; (Isaiah l. 6.) *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.* Again, in Lamentations iii. 30. *He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him;* expressions indicating the utmost degree of *MEERNESS*; and absolutely prophetic of the *Messiah's own conduct*. As to the *second* passage, that if any one *will*, (that is, is determined) to sue thee at *law*, and to take away thy coat, or under garment, (or as it may be interpreted, will enter into a suit with thee, for a trifle) *let him have thy cloke also*, or a still more useful or valuable part of thy drels. Herein again, a lesson of mere *prudence* is strongly enforced upon *christian principle*. Not that it would be unlawful, or wicked, to go to law in defence of our *rights*; but that the loss of two such trifles, would be very inconsiderable, in comparison of those vexatious snares and expences, which would probably attend the charge of the suit. We must take notice likewise, that our Savior is here training young converts to *christianity*, and warning them from involving themselves in disputes, wherein their enemies would probably have the *advantage*, from superiority of power. Further, *Let not thy left-hand know what thy right-hand doth*, is plainly a *proverbial* expression of strict care to keep an action from being too publicly known. It does not mean, that we are on no account to let men *see or know of our good works*, by

which our Heavenly Father is glorified, in giving us the *heart* to perform them; it only intimates, that *boasting* of our virtuous deeds, takes off from the *value* of them, since by so doing, we seem to slight the principle of *faith* in God's knowledge, who, as he seeth in *secret*, will reward us openly; and it would be the excess of absurdity, to receive it in any *other* sense, because our Savior declares, that by their *fruits*, his truly faithful servants can *only be known*. In regard to cutting off, or getting rid of those limbs, or organs of sense, that are said to be instruments of *offence*, that is, occasions of our *falling* into any particular sins, a person must be void of common sense, to suppose the words to be taken *literally*, because sin being seated in the *heart*, the *maiming* or *blinding* ourselves would not *effectually* promote the *cure*. They must therefore be admitted as strong figurative expressions only; to represent the *necessity* of parting with any darling lust or passion, though as dear to us as a *right-hand* or *right-eye*, (which are in general productive of the most accurate service) rather than by the indulgence of *forbidden* pleasures, to forfeit the happiness of our *souls*. And the comparison is natural, strong and beautiful; for it shews it to be as absolutely expedient, to mortify all the inclinations of sinful nature, as it is to part with a disordered member, to prevent the death of the whole body; indeed it is as much *more* so, as the soul is the most *valuable* part of man, and to *last for ever* *. As to

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* And as being particularly spoken to the people of that day, when christianity had so many *foes*, we may usefully interpret it in *this* sense likewise: that though our friends and kinsfolk be naturally as dear to us, as right-hands and right-eyes (being members, in a manner, of the same body) and so valuable to us, in the various essential happiness of life, yet if we are in danger of being weaned by them from God, and the profession of our faith in Christ, that is, if one or the other must necessarily be given up; if they are *enemies* to the cause which alone can rescue us from the powers of darkness,

the passage from St. Paul, it is a most lively transcript of the Master's *own spirit*, teaching us to avoid all manner of revenge, and to shew every possible degree of love towards our *very enemies*; but by no means compelling us to that sort of affection towards *them*, which a virtuous conduct in others demands from us, for that would be inconsistent with pious principle, which cannot possibly entertain the same regard for a bad action, as a good one; but it only recommends such an inward benevolence, and outward beneficence, as the necessities of a fellow creature may require. Further, it is not, therefore, reasonable to suppose, that while the Apostle advises so much positive kindness, he would encourage a private wish of its producing *greater mischief*; therefore, *by heaping coals of fire on them*, we may conclude he means to express *figuratively* the power of a *forgiving, charitable temper*, which is capable, by such unexpected and generous conduct, of melting our enemy into *repentance*, and a better frame of mind. He supposes by such treatment, that he will be so *sensibly* touched, that he will no more be able to stand out against this noble conduct, than to bear on his *head burning coals*, without feeling the *effect* of them. Whatever other interpretation these words may bear, it can never be allowed, in a contradictory sense, to the pure spirit of the gospel: and as it is very certain, many an enemy has been gained by this god-like behavior, it is profitable to christians to give it this construction. These particular passages are purposely enlarged upon, to shew you what little foundation

darkness, we ought to renounce *them all*, rather than hazard our *own souls*; for *who so loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me* (saith the Master); these words prove the value of this interpretation: but we must remember at the same time, that these words were spoken only of those who were *enemies to the cross of Christ*, and the doctrine he delivered, and that they by no means discourage a natural affection, and incumbent duty towards our friends and relations,

there is in *reason*, for any *objection* to them, and that you may thereby form a judgment of any other difficulties or exceptions that profane critics shall presume to advance, which, depend upon it, are equally easy to be defended.

All persons who really desire to profit by the study of God's word, must restrain the carnal mind from dwelling too much upon the *outward letters*; and by applying with humility, endeavor to find out the *inward meaning*. Human criticism, and modern elegance, must give place to the dictates of God's Holy Spirit. The divine judgment cannot err. We must, therefore, be cautious not to oppose the sentiments of our *own narrow wisdom*, but always keep in mind, that however uncouthly the terms of scripture may *sound*, in some particular relations, the only *possible* fault must be in the *translation*, or the *times*. We must always recollect, that it is the *word of the Most High*; and was doubtless suited to the capacity, manners, and profit of the different periods of time, when the different prophets wrote it. The sacred reverence paid to it in *their times*, by wise and holy men, *prove* that no *such* objections *then* existed, as modern infidels have vainly and rashly raised. We must remember, that the love of God, by whose word all things in heaven and earth are created, governed, and preserved, hath provided it, the God of gods, and Lord of lords, the Invisible, Almighty, Eternal and only God, he hath spoken it. Nothing but truth can proceed from the source of all truth. Nothing but wisdom can flow from the fountain of all knowledge. However, therefore, (through want of grace) the sons of men may weakly conceive, or profanely talk of God's most holy word, let us submit to be directed, according as his goodness has permitted the instruction to descend to us; and that we may escape the snare that is spread for us, in listening to our *own imaginations*, we shall do well to attend

in the prophet David's character of the happy man, in the 1st Psalm; it is extremely applicable to the present subject, both in the light of caution and encouragement: *Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful*: From this text the Psalmist plainly points out three dangerous characters he would have us avoid, if we would secure the blessings of a peaceful conscience, and the favour of our God. Now under these three characters we have a full description of all manner of wickedness, and offences against God. By the *ungodly*, we are to understand all such as have no fixed rule of faith, who are not governed by the influence of a holy love and fear of the Almighty, but who act according to the maxims of this world, whose chief study is to accomplish their temporal designs, who sacrifice to the pleasures of sense, and the pride of life, without making God and heaven the objects of their thoughts. By *sinners*, in a degree worse than these, the prophet does not mean such as fall through ignorance, weakness of nature, or surprize of temptation, for who then could be *blessed*? who, Christ excepted, ever lived upon earth without sin? Even the *just* man is said, by way of comparison, to *fall seven times, and to rise again*, Prov. xxiv. 16. and as St. John affirms, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*; but though the righteous may fall (in that all flesh is frail), yet they walk not in wilful and malicious wickedness: they do not *continue* in sin, they do not *delight* in it, they do not *persevere*, like the thoughtless and unenlightened sinner, in *adding sin to sin*, without any fear of God's just punishment; but rising higher in the use of every future degree of *caution*, from every accidental or sudden fall, through the power of God's grace and infinite mercy, they gain ground of their infirmities, and are enabled to

strive against, and conquer the assaults of sin. By such sinners then, whose ways it is our highest wisdom to avoid, the prophet means the *unconverted* or the *reprobate* sinner, whose whole life and conversation being averse from virtue and religion, they may be truly said to *take pleasure in evil*. If therefore we would not forfeit the blessing of God we must avoid temptation, we must on no account put ourselves in the way of such men, lest their manners infect, and corrupt us. And as to the *third* sort of characters, as they are placed *last*, we may suppose they rise in *excess of danger*, as to their conduct and example; they are termed *scorners*; they are such as are not satisfied with living in all manner of sin *themselves*, but are advanced so far in desperate vice, as to ridicule and despise all manner of virtue, religion, and holiness in *other men*. Such profane mockers as would set up the rushlight of their corrupted reason against the sun of divine revelation, and the truth and wisdom of God's inspired word. No one who wishes to partake of God's favour will readily mix with such as these. The two former are not beyond the reach of grace (though their case is very dangerous), for the blind may receive sight, and the most corrupted wounds may be healed; the mercy of God is mighty to melt down the stubborn, and his judgments, and the power of his word, is *as the piercing of a two edged sword, dividing to the joints and marrow*; but such as *willfully* shut their eyes against the light, such as throw away the remedy, such as sin foully against *conviction*, and defy and mock the threatened vengeance of the Most High, their case must be considered as *truly desperate*: it is no offence against charity to say, that such scarcely ever experience the gift of true repentance, for how shall *they* repent who deny the need of it? Such we generally see, *after their hardness and impenitent hearts, do treasure up themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and*
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the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Rom. ii. 5. And that you may not mistake the description of these scorers, it may be profitable to present you with an example of them from holy writ.

We read in the 2d book of Chronicles, and xxxth chap. that when the good king Hezekiah had destroyed idolatry in the land, had purified the temple of the Lord, and reformed the impious customs of the people to the service of the pure religion of their fathers, he sent messengers to every city to assemble the people to Jerusalem, in order to keep the solemn fast of Easter, or the passover, according to the Lord's appointment; but when the messengers arrived in the different cities, instead of praising God for their deliverance from idolatry, and for raising them up so good a prince, and restoring to them the pure religion of their ancestors, the scripture tells us, *That they laughed the ambassadors to scorn, and mocked them.* Now we can hardly doubt of the dreadful state of such scoffers, or think that there was any hope of their recovery, since they wilfully preferred the service of satan, to the pure worship of God: they turned their backs on the gates of mercy and deliverance. Again, we have a further picture of this hopeless race of men, in the last chapter of the same book, where, after the Lord God of their fathers, from the compassion he had upon his people, and on his dwelling-place, sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending them, and that they still mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words and his prophets: the wrath of the Lord God at last arose against his people, till there was no remedy left; they rejected the only means, and they were given up to their enemies, as we see in the continuation of their history: and thus doubtless will all be given up to their spiritual enemy at last, who scoff at God's word, and neglect the methods by which only they can be saved. Further, of

these proud and perverse sinners we have another example in the fate of the old world, who mocked at the counsel of Noah, when he would have warned them to avoid God's threatened vengeance; but, slighting the word of God, they perished. And as the last instance of these scorers mentioned in the Old Testament, we read that Lot preached to the abandoned people of Sodom, that unless they repented, and reformed, the Lord would destroy both them and their cities, with signal punishment, but they also scoffed at the friendly admonition afforded them, and at length provoked the Lord (after he had rescued his believing servants) to destroy those mockers of his holy word by fire and brimstone from out of heaven. In short, such is the depravity of mankind, and so general this character, that under the greatest of all God's merciful dealings towards his creatures, there were always *scoffers* who despised his word, and derided the particular methods in which his wisdom saw good to speak and act for their salvation. But the most woe-ful example of this abominable race of men is recorded in the character of the malevolent scribes and pharisees, in our Blessed Lord's time. Those proud, covetous, and self-conceited worldlings scorned both the humble Jesus and his evangelical saving doctrines. The worldly-wise esteemed the gospel as *foolishness*, and bitter woe is consequently denounced against them: as they slighted the last gracious call in the person of God's own Son, we cannot suppose that any thing but inevitable destruction must have been the portion of such scorers. This is a deadly character of man, which ever has existed from the first fall of man, and ever will remain, till the world is again destroyed for its increased wickedness. St. Peter hath expressly prophesied (2 Peter iii. 3.) *That in the last days shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, denying the Lord that bought them; and by their damnable heresies drawing*

drawing destruction on themselves: Of all kinds of wicked men then, of all kinds of evil practices, we must principally beware of encouraging any that turn the word of God into a jest, lest we provoke the Lord to deny his mercy to us, as he did to many of the vain scorers that have been set before you. Let us not become wilful murderers of our own eternal peace: let us turn to God while our day of grace is mercifully continued; for to repent in the world to come will be too late, since *there* the wicked will receive judgment without mercy. These warnings are intended to guard unwary christians from falling into such sins, and to inspire them with becoming reverence for all God's holy word. But all men have not faith, nor will they use the *means* of obtaining it; such therefore will boldly continue to fill up the measure of their iniquities by either writing or speaking profanely against the plainness and authority of the scriptures, being vainly puffed up by a carnal mind; for according to the description in the text, *the unlearned and unstable do wrest the scriptures to their own destruction*. And though under the power of this spirit of delusion, even Jesus Christ, (as St. Paul asserts) *is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness*; yet *is he the power of God and the wisdom of God*, to all God's children, from whatever flock they are called, whether Jews or Gentiles. *He is set forth* (as the pious Simeon declares,) *for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against*. And as all perish through their own fault, who deny or refuse him and his salvation, so is his word, and indeed all scripture, a snare to those who attempt to scorn, and undervalue its design or power. As he is the cause of life only to those who are God's children by adoption, so is the whole bible the gift of God to salvation, to them only who *believe* it. Thus for the same reason, naturally, even Christ himself, the
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prophets before him, the apostles his followers, all faithful ministers of the gospel, and every word in the book of life, can only be *the savor of death unto death*, to the profane and reprobate person; which is the same thing as saying, *He is set forth for their falling*; that is, to be the judge of their impenitence and wilful obstinacy.

Surely then, it behoves all most highly to reverence a book that carries both life and death in its contents. It is impossible to be too wary of making a mock of such a treasure. This is a risk that should check every inclination of this nature, and on the contrary assist our seriousness in the study of it, that in proportion as the scriptures appear obscure or difficult to our understanding, the more we may fear to fall short of the favor of the holy Author who inspired them. This will urge us to more humility and diligence in the pursuit. And of this every reasonable mind will be thoroughly assured, that to despise or ridicule a passage because we do not understand it, is a certain mark of extreme folly, and impiety united; it being the most dangerous of all errors to sport or cavil with the words of the Almighty. Whenever therefore the various sacrifices, rites, and ceremonies of the old law, do strike our ignorance with surprize, we must modestly conclude they had all a holy and very significant *design*, as relating to particular *times* and *people*. And indeed they have all been occasionally explained, by learned, and godly men, as *shadows* and *figures* of the *things* and *persons* revealed to us in the gospel. Again, if the repetition of learned names, and the history of their families, may seem not over edifying to the plainer class of people, yet others may, and do profit by this curious and satisfactory study: for *though the poor have the gospel preached unto them*, yet do the scriptures contain food for the *strong* as well as for the *weak*; nor is there any thing in that treasure-house of wisdom,

dom, however trifling it may seem to a carnal mind, but what is capable of some *spiritual*, and most *important* instruction, to all who will devote their time becomingly, to search the *spirit* contained in the *letter*. We must not act like *fools* then, and condemn and throw aside what staggers our mortal power, but let us be earnest to understand and keep what is indisputably profitable to *all alike*; what is capable of instructing and improving the most unlearned student. What *be who runs may read* to his advantage.

And as to that objection which some have made to several passages in the Psalms, which they affirm to be void of christian charity and fellow feeling, because the prophet appears to deal out *curses* upon several nations, and their posterity; on this subject two things are necessary to be observed, in order to remove this charge. First, that in the language of *prophecy*, the Psalmist doth not express his *wish* for their destruction, but only declares the certain *future consequence* of God's wrath against all his *enemies*. Secondly, as he was peculiarly favored by the Most High, and doubtless often inspired by the influence of the Holy Spirit, with pious zeal for the glory of the Almighty, we cannot possibly suppose him possessed with a spirit of *malice* against the *persons* of such people, but that he spiritually prayed for the destruction of such *errors* and *vices* as exposed them unavoidably to God's just vengeance: in the same spirit as that of St. Paul, who would have the mortal body delivered to the temporal tormentor, *that the soul might be saved in the day of the Lord*. And we should take further notice, that when David professes in these particular passages *to hate them that hate the Lord*; he hateth them with a *qualified*, not a *malicious* hatred, that is, with such a hatred or abhorrence, as is consistent with the *perfect laws of charity*. But in further defence of these expressions,

sions, which by some are judged so very exceptionable, it may be serviceable to give you the following plain and excellent illustration of them, in the words of a most able and evangelical writer, a pious prelate of our own day. "A faithful servant (says he) has the same *interests*, the same *friends*, the same *enemies* with his *master*, whose cause and honor he is in duty bound on all occasions to support. A good man hates, as God himself doth; he hates not the *persons* of men, but their *sins*; not what God made them, but what they have made *themselves*. We are neither to hate the persons, on account of the vices they practise, nor love the vices for the sake of those who practise them; whoever invariably observes this *distinction*, hath the love of God and his neighbor abiding in him; as doubtless David had, in an eminent degree." But this affords no warrant to us frail creatures in any shape to utter curses upon our brethren. We have neither the spirit of *prophecy*, nor the spirit of *holiness*, which these choice instruments of Heaven possessed. Being at the best, far short of such a measure of grace, and sinners against God *ourselves* in manifold shapes, we are taught by Him, who knew what was in the sons of men, to *pray* for our enemies, lest in case we denounce vengeance against them, we be found to call down curses on our own heads. Let us always therefore pray for grace to put a wise and favorable construction on every part of scripture which may not be wholly level to our own apprehensions. Let us beseech him to *purify our hearts*, and enlighten our *understandings*, and then we may be sure, instead of disputing about Holy Writ, and much less *scoffing* at it, we shall embark in this useful study with *humility*, true *wisdom*, and to the improvement of our *lives*. We shall receive its precepts with christian

tian reverence; we shall strive to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, whatever is needful for our present peace, and future happiness. Then shall we glorify God's Holy Name and Word, while we are carefully *working out our own salvation*. To HIM, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, be all praise, honor and power for ever and ever. Amen.

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shall we glorify God's Holy Name and Word,
while we are carefully carrying out our own labours.
To win, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, since our
sons and our God, be all praise, honor and power
for ever and ever. Amen.

Forasmuch as we are sinners, and have committed many
wickednesses, and are in need of thy mercy, O Lord,
we beseech thee, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
and forgive us all our sins, and preserve us from all
temptations of the devil, the flesh, and the world,
that we may be able to stand firm in thy love,
and to keep thy commandments, and to glorify thee
in all things, forever and ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE VI.

*An Homily upon Alms Deeds, and Mercifulness towards
the Poor and Needy.*

GALATIANS vi. 10.

*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all
men, especially to them who are of the household of
faith.*

AMONG the various duties which Almighty God requireth of all true christians, by which his Holy Name is most glorified, and the faithfulness of our profession proved, none are more acceptable to our heavenly Father, none are more profitable to ourselves, none bring us nearer to the example our Blessed Lord hath set us, than compassion and mercy towards the needy, and all that are afflicted, or in distress.

Yet such is the slowness of our fallen nature, towards any thing that is purely good and holy, that in nothing are we more negligent, than in the uniform exercise of this heavenly quality. As therefore it is so very essential a preparation for God's favor, it concerns all, who profess to be the servants of Christ, to open their eyes to the necessity of cultivating this spirit, and

to

to consider how strictly they are bound by God's word, to practise this important duty. All true christians should earnestly consult their master's will in this matter, that having corrected their former deficiency therein, by a better knowledge of their duty, they may in future use more diligence to obey his precepts; and when by conviction of the necessity of their obedience, the mind is open to perceive the good effects of it, the well-disposed will then be encouraged to proceed in acts of mercy and benevolence. And they who, through former ignorance, have neglected, or thought lightly of this virtue, they also, when told how essentially it is related to their best interests, may happily be brought to consider it seriously, and apply themselves to the reformation of an unfeeling temper.

To the end, therefore, that all who hear and peruse this discourse, may more clearly understand what is about to be said upon this christian virtue, that they may more easily remember it, and thereby be better prepared to bring forth the fruit of such instruction, it may be advantageous to make the following division of the subject.

First; to shew, how earnestly we are exhorted, in God's holy word, to be *rich in mercy and good works*, and how well pleasing all our endeavors of this kind are to our heavenly Father.

Secondly; to prove, how very advantageous the exercise of such virtues are to ourselves, and what valuable fruit they are calculated to produce: And,

Thirdly; to confirm, from the authority of scripture, that all who are inclined to be generous and charitable to their distressed neighbors, need never be in fear of wanting *themselves*, in consequence of their christian liberality, for that they thereby lay the strongest foundation for prosperity; they provide the very best security against all temporal misfortunes.

First

First then, we are assured in several parts of God's word, that nothing is more pleasing and acceptable to the great Author of our being, than our imitation of Him; in this choice perfection of his nature, by displaying acts of charity and mercy to the utmost of our power; for however short our best endeavours must fall, through the imperfection of mortality, yet the *sincerity* of them will be graciously accepted, and is of high price in the sight of God. Of this there can be no manner of doubt, because we read, that He esteemeth that to be offered to *himself* which is bestowed on the *needy*; *who so giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord*. And besides, as every *genuine* caution of this kind can proceed only from the influence of his grace upon the heart, He cannot fail approving the virtue that He inspireth his creatures to perform. The above assertion is the language of the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the Wise Man, in Proverbs xix. 17, and that we may pay still more regard to this precept, our blessed Lord assureth us in his gospel, and confirmeth it with an oath, that the alms we give unto the poor, are in a manner presented unto *Him*, and as such, shall be reckoned at the last day; these are his own words, in the character of our judge, when every action shall be punished or rewarded as it deserves, Matthew xxv. *Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done any good and merciful action unto one of the least of these my brethren, (that is, to the poorest and most insignificant, in point of station, of those I come to die for, as well as for yourselves) ye have done it unto me*. In relieving *their* hunger, I consider it as if he had relieved *mine*; in quenching *their* thirst, as if ye had given drink to *me*; in clothing *them*, as though ye had contributed to *my* bodily comfort; when ye took them in from perishing with cold, I valued the action as though ye had lodged *myself*; when ye relieved them in their sickness, or com-

sorted them under confinement, I accepted your
 mercy as shewn to me. And why are all these ap-
 plications of our *bountiful* pity towards each other,
 mentioned as done unto our Lord? why, to infill
 into us the principle upon which all virtue should
 proceed, to render it acceptable to God; in that,
 all true christians are constrained thereto, by the
 love of Christ; this must excite, this only can qualify
 the deed; render it precious in his sight, or pro-
 fitable to ourselves: and thus in truth it must be,
 that all may have a general rule, and motive to
 direct them, or to condemn them for neglecting it.
 This is necessary, in order to make the due dis-
 tinction between acts of *ostentation*, or mere con-
 stitutional tenderness of disposition, and pure *chari-
 tily*, so as to stamp a religious value on our good
 works; that the poorest, as well as the richest,
 the hardest, no less than the tender-hearted, may be
 without excuse. It is the will, the principle, that
 is *all in all*; for the poor widow's mite was equally,
 if not more, acceptable than the richest gifts that
 were cast into the treasury, and our duty to God is
 as necessary to qualify the plentiful mercies of the
 compassionate, as to soften the less flexible nature
 of the obdurate. To illustrate this further, by
 a plain and apposite comparison, as he who re-
 ceiveth a prince's ambassadors, and entertaineth
 them well, shews respect to the prince from whom
 they came; so he that receiveth the miserable and
 needy, and rescueth them from their distress and
 trouble, doth thereby clearly receive and honor
 their master Christ; whose providence appoints
 these objects to prove our love and obedience to
 his precepts; for He is Lord of all; with Him is no
 respect of persons; and, as He was poor and afflicted
 himself, while he lived upon earth, while working
 the mystery of our salvation; so, at his departure
 hence, he ordained that the poor we should have al-
 ways with us, to remind us of the condition he him-
 self

self submitted to: and to furnish us with a trial during his absence, how we should conduct ourselves in this respect; and therefore that it becomes positively incumbent on us, to do to *them* even as we should be glad, and ready to do to *him*, if present. The like cause, we may conclude, produced those words of God to Moses, Deut. xv. 11. *For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee saying, thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.* Doubtless this was said, to declare that God would supply a continual trial of his people, whether they loved him or not: whether they were willing to be grateful for the superior benefits they received, in point of worldly preference, by distributing of them to those that wanted: whether, in short, they would be obedient to his will, in order that they might secure to themselves his future care and favor: and give proof of their faith in his promises, by a dutiful compliance with his commands, in this essential article of tender feeling for their brethren.

The scriptures do further furnish us with the example of the Apostles, and immediate followers of Christ, in this respect; for they could not fall from the daily conversation of their Master, and the nature of his doctrine; to be well assured of his regard and wishes for the poor. And all the holy fathers, who lived before, and since the coming of our Saviour, who doubtless partook of the Spirit of grace, and were no less acquainted with God's holy will, abound, in all their writings, with continual exhortations, to be merciful as God is merciful; not to forget the poor, but to be bountiful in the relief of their necessities.

In the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians, v. 14. St. Paul exhorteth us, *To comfort the feeble minded, to support the weak, and to be patient or charitable toward all men.* And in Hebrews xiii. 16. he adviseth them, *not to forget to do good, and to communi-*

cate, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. The prophet Isaiah teacheth us wisely, in the lviith chap. and 7th verse, *To deal our bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor, that are cast out, to our house; when we see the naked to cover him, and not to hide ourselves from our own flesh:* that is, whether stranger or near relation, to make no difference on the pure and sublime principle of *charity*; for we are all alike, made of the same materials, and do bear God's image, in proportion as we obey his laws.

Further, we read in the ivth chap. of the book of Tobit, and 16th verse, what godly council that good man gave to his son, *Give of thy bread to the hungry, and of thy garments to them that are naked, and, according to thine abundance give alms: and let not thine eye be odious, when thou givest alms.* And the advice of the holy Father St. Chrysostom, is truly valuable upon this same subject. Let mercy ever cleave unto us, as a garment; that is, let us be no less mindful to adorn ourselves with this rare virtue, than we are to render our persons pleasing with our outward clothing; and as this is our daily work, so let us be continually mindful to distribute our alms; and to shew ourselves merciful in all things. But to what end are all these frequent admonitions, and earnest counsels by the prophets, apostles, and holy fathers? Surely to afford us profitable examples of becoming conduct; that as they trusted in God themselves, and therefore truly discharged their duty to him, so they judged it a part of their office to declare his good pleasure herein to us, who should come after them; and that, from the purest love, in order that we might be benefitted by their endeavors, both to inform and persuade us, that our brotherly attention to all who stand in need of our protection and relief, was a sacrifice of most pleasing favor to the Lord; and would certainly promote our final happiness. Their lessons are confirmed by this saying of the son of Sirach, Eccclus. xxxv. 2, 6, 7. *He that*
giveth

giveth alms sacrificeth praise; the sweet savor thereof is before the Most High. The offering of the righteous maketh the altar fat; and the memorial thereof shall never be forgotten. If you need further testimony, better proof cannot be produced of the worth of all these scriptural declarations, than the lives and actions of these holy patriarchs, of whom we read in sacred history. And first let us consider the character of *Abraham*, in this point of view. God took such delight in this man's ways, on account of his benevolent heart, and hospitable acts, that he condescended to appear unto him in the form of an angel, and even to visit him in his tent. His relation *Lot* was likewise so well disposed, in regard to this god-like virtue, which he shewed by his attention to the messengers who were sent to him, in the character of *strangers*, by receiving them into his house, lest they should suffer from their continuance in the open street, that God so protected him from the judgment he was about to inflict on the wicked city where he dwelt, that he and his family were saved from its destruction. The holy *Job*, the generous *Tobit*, (lately mentioned) and many others, afford us singular instances of God's special love to them, because they took delight in mercy. And as all these, by walking in the paths of loving kindness towards their unfortunate and afflicted brethren, in this life, did so fulfil God's law as to obtain his distinguished favor while on earth, so do they now enjoy the choice rewards of their heavenly Father, in the blessed regions of his holy kingdom. And in gracious mercy towards us, who are travelling thither, they are recorded in God's eternal word, as guides and lanthorns to our feet, to direct us in his ways; to provoke us to kind exertions by their example; and to invite us so to live *now*, that we may join their blessed society hereafter, and live for ever with them in the participation of heavenly glory. And thus,

truly, did an ancient Father, St. Augustine, speak when he affirmed, that charity and benevolence point the straightest road to heaven: The poor man, saith he, is our direction post upon this journey; for as it is a custom to erect a cross, where doubtful ways unite, in order to inform the traveller which to take, that he may journey surely to the place whither he is bound; so hath God's word set up the needy man, his house or family, as a never failing guide. And he who is desirous to go straight forward, must look for the door of the poor. If we do not deviate from this plain mark, we shall be certain not to wander greatly out of the nearest path.

Let us now consider the rule before us, by a comparison with *worldly* maxims. It is the custom of crafty and designing men, that if they know another, (how much soever lower than themselves) who is in any favor with the prince or nobleman, by whom they wish to be rewarded or forgiven, they will gladly cultivate an intimacy with him, and shew him any favor; hoping, that when occasion serves, he may be careful either in procuring kindness for them, or delivering them from trouble. Now surely christians should take shame, that *worldly minded* men should exhibit such skill in managing *their temporal* concerns, which are so short lived at best, while they who pretend their treasures are *above*, do prove so scandalously negligent for their security; but this makes good our Lord's judgment on the case; *that the children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light*, that is, that they adapt the proper means to the desired end. Surely great ought to be our encouragement to practise this virtue, since our blessed Master testifieth his compassion for the poor, in all he said, or did. He calleth them his *little ones*: and by the tenderest of all titles, nameth them his *brethren*. And St. James asserteth, ii. 5.

That

That God hath chosen the poor to be heirs of his kingdom : but then *they* must likewise attend to the conclusion of the verse, *which kingdom he hath promised to those who love him* ; this must be the description of the poor who will be accepted. Merely being poor will prepare no man for the kingdom of God, for the condition is the *mark* of their *love* for him. As they are set up for a trial to the *rich*, (or objects to attract *their* mercy) so are *they* also tried by this situation, for their *patience*, their *resignation*, their *contentment*, their *honesty*, and their *industry*; without which virtues the safer the station God's providence hath allotted them, instead of its profiting it will only help to condemn them. Although God permitteth that there shall always *be poor in the land*, for the various ends of his own wise government, yet he can never allow them to be *idle*, or dishonest, or murmurers, or high-minded, or insolent to their superiors. No, for this would be to destroy the order and beauty of all government; and to confirm this truth, pass all dispute, attend to the former part of the foregoing verse of St. James's epistle, *Hearken my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world RICH IN FAITH? and (on that account doubtless) heirs of the kingdom of heaven.* Here then we shall do well to mark the true description of God's *poor* : they must be *rich in faith*, satisfied that what he has appointed is for the *best*; that while he pleases to continue them poor, it is the safest course for them to become partakers of his future rewards. They must even be *rich in faith*; that is, place their *whole* confidence in his wisdom, power, mercy, and truth; and the belief that they shall obtain the *promise*, if they run the race that is set before them, if they fight valiantly for the prize in that rank of their warfare, best suited to their abilities and attainments. This then is a most useful lesson for the poor, that they may not deceive themselves, and think they will be sure of heaven, on account of the indigence

of their worldly affairs, for they must undoubtedly be poor in *spirit*, as well as in *circumstances*, or it is to be feared they will never reach the end of their calling; but still, they are certainly divinely appointed to try the virtues of the *rich*, and afford *them* a blessed opportunity of securing *their* post; for we are told in scripture, that the prayer they make for their benefactors shall be acceptable, and heard of God. And further, that his creatures may want no motives to rescue them from the danger and deceitful power of riches, he warns them, that the *complaints* of the poor do likewise come up before him, and that these also shall be heard. Thus we are taught by the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus iv. 6. *That if the poor curse thee in the bitterness of his soul, his prayers shall be heard of him who made him*; that is, if through oppression, or *WRONG*, or want of feeling for his miseries, thou render his situation still more deplorable, so as to disturb his contentment, and cause him to *complain*; but this must always be understood of the *bumble* and *deserving* poor, and not of the greedy, the dissatisfied, or the *insolent*; for even as the *prayers* of the wicked are said never to prevail, much less will their *curses* do any harm, but to *themselves alone*.

After all, it is doubtless the highest wisdom in the rich, to be loving and courteous to the needy, for we know that he that owneth them to be *his* (*for the rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all*): He who is their creator and friend, and refuseth not such servants in his household; he is mighty to reward and punish; and we all stand hourly in need of his preserving hand. Let us never then be backward in shewing every distressed brother all manner of love and kindness in our power; since in so doing we shall secure *his* favor who is both able and willing to confer every benefit upon us, that will really advance our *greatest happiness*.

happinefs. A stronger motive surely cannot be offered to you than that which Christ himself proposes; who, to convince us how very acceptable every exertion of benevolence is in his sight, declareth that he that giveth but a *cup of cold water*, (the smallest degree of assistance that any necessitous brother may require) if it be given in his *name*, from a true principle of *genuine charity*; that is, in obedience to his *commands*; *verily, they shall in no wise lose their reward*; and what that reward is, we clearly collect from the sense of the whole process of his final judgment, even no less than a place in his heavenly kingdom; and surely it must be allowed a safe conclusion, that God most highly values what he so largely rewards, since he who promises a princely recompence for a slender act of good will, shews plainly, that he is more delighted with the *giver* than the *gift*; and that he more esteems the action that is done in *sincerity* and *love*, than the richest fruit that could be produced from any *other* motive. In the conclusion of this subject, it may not be disserviceable to repeat, that it is our love to God alone that stamps true value on every liberal gift; and whosoever hath been negligent in acts of mercy, or hath performed them on any *other* than the *evangelical principle*, so fully explained in this discourse, let him, as a christian, hasten to repair his error; let him learn that God absolutely requireth such conduct of him; and as for all who happily cherish the seeds of mercy in their breasts, let them be assured, that their charitable endeavors are accepted, and highly pleasing in God's sight: and for their further comfort and encouragement, that he will require them amply in the everlasting realms of love and peace; for as the Wise Man justly speaks, he who by succouring the needy trusteth his treasure to the Lord, he only *lendeth* it for a *time* in that heavenly bank which will restore *such* interest as in comparison will sink all *worldly-gain* to *nothing*; for

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for the glorious recompence is no less, *even life eternal*, according to the never failing promise, and for the merit's sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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DISCOURSE VII.

The Second Part of the Sermon upon the same Subject.

ECCLESIASTICUS xxxv. 7. and 11.

The sacrifice of a just man is acceptable, and the memorial thereof shall never be forgotten: For the Lord recompenseth, and will give thee seven times as much.

IT having been shewn you, in the first discourse upon this subject; that the relief of the poor, and the contributing to the necessities of the miserable, were duties most acceptable to our Savior Christ; and that in truth, he esteemeth that to be done to *himself*, which, for his sake, we are ready to do to *others*: As the example and sentiments of the prophets, apostles, and holy fathers, have likewise been so fully delivered upon this point, and as you must be sensible, how well pleased God has always been with those of whom the scriptures give a good report in this matter; let these united testimonies, and especially the love of your Savior, (of which by these means we are so thoroughly assured) incline us, from this moment, to pay this grateful and bounden service to Almighty God; and

and to be ready on all occasions to evince a charitable spirit, to the very utmost of our power.

We come now, to this second division of the discourse, in which it was purposed to prove what great advantage is derived to *ourselves* from the faithful exercise of this virtue. Our Blessed Lord teaches us, in the xxvith chap. of St. Matthew, *That it would profit a man nothing though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul*; for (as he most justly argues) *what shall a man gain in exchange for his soul*? If he becomes a captive to Satan when he dies, what will it benefit him *then*, though he had once been in possession of all the riches and glories of the earth in his life-time? By this saying then, we are most clearly instructed in the value of the soul's health and peace, beyond all worldly enjoyments whatsoever; and this consideration doth so tend to awaken the mind, as to urge us likewise to seek earnestly by what *means* we may preserve our souls from all danger; that is, how we may recover them into a saving condition, if unhappily we have turned aside from the right way; as also, how, if we are in a *safe* course, we may be enabled to *keep* it: And we are hereby further taught, to set the highest value upon so precious a remedy, so inestimable a means that hath sufficient strength and virtue to provide and preserve so great a treasure: for thus much most surely will be granted, that if we justly regard that medicine, or balsam which is able to repair any of the grievous disorders, or wounds to which the human frame is subject, much more ought we to value *that* which is capable of so greatly benefiting our *immortal part*; and that we may be sure of the *effect*, and never at a loss for the *application* of so choice a remedy, the divine physician exhibits to us both his love and wisdom, in shewing us what *it is*, where we may *find* it, and how to *apply* it to *saving purposes*.

Now

Now this we learn in the xith chap. of St. Luke, answer! for when our Savior and his disciples were heavily accused by the pharisees for having defiled their souls in slighting the tradition of the elders, because they sat down to meat with unwashed hands, contrary to the custom of the Jews; our Lord, in reply to their superstitious charge, acquaints them with a certain remedy how to purify their souls, although they should be guilty of slighting these unprofitable ceremonies; *Rather give alms of such as you have; (saith he) and behold all things are clean unto you;* by which speech he clearly enforceth this doctrine, that to have a heart disposed to charity and mercy, was the surest method of keeping the soul pure in the sight of God: *He saith (saith he again) did not he who made that which is without, make that which is within also?* Hence doubtless we are instructed, that a readiness to distribute of our good things unto the poor, is of essential service in cleansing the soul from the infectious taint of sin: It is the most effectual weapon to combat covetousness, which is a deadly poison to the soul: And the holy spirit of God doth inculcate the same lesson, in various parts of the inspired writings; for alms are said to deliver from death, and suffer not the soul to come into darkness; for a merciful spirit is a great gift of God, and they will have good trial before the Most High, who are exercised in acts of kindness and compassion towards those who are in trouble. The valuable store that of old was set by this virtue of charity, may be collected from the sentiment of the preacher (Ecclesiasticus iii. 30.), who affirms, *That as water will quench a flaming fire, so alms maketh an atonement for sins* * : and this indeed

* It is almost needless to observe to the christian reader, that here, and in any other place where such choice effects are attributed to

is certain, that where the grace of mercy dwelleth in the soul of man, the violence of sin will not be able to take deep root in him; and when, through weakness or surprise, he happens to fall, this shall the powerful influence of a merciful disposition assist in recovering him to a right state of mind; and act as a sovereign remedy in healing the wounds of depraved nature. And on this account one of the ancient fathers (St. Cyprian) dwelleth largely on the necessity of cultivating so rich a virtue, since tender good-will, and active bounty, are able to obtain such benefits to the soul; but it is very needful to add this caution by the way, that though there is abundant reason for magnifying the excellence of a compassionate temper, yet we do not allow it to exclude all other virtues; for if a man indulges in any *wilful sins*, a benevolent turn of mind will avail him nothing in the sight of an *all-pure God*: We by no means therefore propose this good quality as a composition for other deficiencies; but what occasions us to dwell so much upon its excellence is this, that where it is exercised UPON PRINCIPLE, its influence is so pervading and universal, its nature is so exalted and corrective, that it is almost impossible for any *premeditated* guilt to dwell in the mind where it hath taken root; and consequently it is a property most desirable to be cherished.

God Most High who are exercised in acts of kindness to others. *moral virtues*, they are always to be considered as proceeding from the *pure principle* of *divine grace* upon the heart, and not from any *unassisted power* in *fallen nature*; they are commended only as being the fruits of a *lively faith* in him who *worketh in us to will and to do*; and so far they may be truly said to profit those who perform them, but in point of *atonement* they are never to be considered as the *primary cause* of man's justification or acceptance, but only as a *part* or *proof* of it, in that they are the *effect* wrought by the satisfaction made by Christ, and demonstrated by this renewal of man's nature to *good works*.

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There is another great objection which many are ready to offer upon hearing such wonderful effects attributed to charity alone; if it is so, say they, that alms giving, and mercy towards the poor, have power to cleanse away our sins, and to reconcile us to God, to preserve us from future punishment, and to help us to become heirs of the kingdom of heaven, then are Christ's merits *lowered*, and his blood was shed in vain, — then may we be said to be justified by *works*, and by *our own deeds* to merit heaven. On *such* foundation it is needless to believe that Christ came into the world, and died to put away our sins; and unnecessarily then did he rise for our justification, as we are taught to believe by the doctrine of St. Paul. Not so: nothing of the kind is implied, in what has been advanced on this subject: and for fear of encouraging to *gross an error*, it will be expedient to convince you, that neither the passages of scripture we have produced in praise of mercy, nor the doctrine of the holy Martyr (Cyprian,) nor the opinion of any other learned and pious person, (how ever highly they may extol the excellence and choice effects of it,) do any where assert, that such charitable deeds are the original *cause* of our acceptance with God, or that by any positive virtue thereof our sins are done away or pardoned, and no further spots of our iniquities remain. This they no where affirm; for this, indeed, would be to *do away Christ's merits completely*, and to wrong our Blessed Redeemer of his transcendent glory. When therefore they talk of mercy washing away our sins, and *preparing* us for God's favor, they mean that the constant exercise of this quality, and due reflection on its *purifying nature*, may help us to correct and reform our vices; for it is certain, that in whomsoever this virtue is permitted to gain ground, and govern, those sins of commission or omission that are in any degree injurious to our neighbor, can never

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long exist. Sordidness is the source of every species of inhumanity: Benevolence is the very opposite to that temper: and charity, doubtless, must contain some prodigious value, when it is so highly extolled, and universally recommended throughout the inspired word of God. Not that it is considered as an ATONEMENT for what is past, but only as a principle calculated by its peculiar influence, to remove the very motive to many trespasses which naturally flow from an unfeeling heart: and in this sense it may be said to wash them away, or prevent their gaining power. In short, pure mercy in man, is an emblem of the darling attribute of the Deity, an emanation of that infinite mercy which moved Him to provide the all-sufficient atonement which reconciled the Great Creator to his fallen helpless creature and is only another name for love. This then is all we are to understand by sayings of this description, (which without sufficient explanation might be exceptionable) viz. that God, out of his abundant goodness to them, whom he hath called to everlasting life, hath so offered his special grace, which hath been profitably received by them, that although on account of their former sinful lives, they once seemed to have been the children of wrath, yet now, by the spirit of God working powerfully in them, and enabling them to keep his commandments, they do manifest by their present outward actions, and the display of christian charity, (which as a religious fruit can only be produced through the power of God's grace) that they are truly the children of their heavenly Father, preparing for eternal glory. And as in time past they deserved that character, which by the judgment of the world is given to barefaced wickedness, and were esteemed as reprobates, so now, by their regular obedience to God's laws, and by the merciful disposition of their souls, which likens them to the fountain of all good, they as openly declare to all mankind that they are the

sons of God, and elect of him unto salvation.* And we may safely offer another illustration of this matter, in order to shew that we do not ascribe any undue merit to good works, beyond the strictest evangelical authority. As then good fruit is not the *cause* that the *tree* is good, but the *tree* must *first* be good, before it can produce *good fruit*; so the good actions of men are not the *cause* that maketh men good; but they are first made good by the gift of the spirit of God's grace which effectually worketh in them; and then they bring forth the fruits of *mercy* and every other virtue: but still in like manner as excellent fruit doth prove the *goodness* of the *tree*, so doth pure beneficence in men most surely prove the worthiness of the actor, which Christ confirms himself in these plain words: *By their fruits ye shall know them*; and should any one further object that men, wicked in *other* respects, may sometimes appear by particular actions, to be *virtuous* and godly, we may reply to this by another plain comparison; that the *crab* and *wild pear* do often appear *outwardly* to have as tempting a *smell* and *colour* as the fruit that is *really good*; but we soon discover by *tasting*, the deceitfulness of the one, and the excellence of the other. In order to pass sound judgment on the intrinsic worth of men's actions, we must always look to the *principle* or *motive* that *excites* them; it is that alone which renders them acceptable to God, or profitable to themselves. And as the true christian sheweth the pure fruit of

* Not *unconditionally* elect, as is evident by their *change*, for the words of the Homily are, *That the grace of God was offered, and received by them fruitfully*, or effectually, which argues *choice* and *power* to *reject* the offer. That we can do nothing strictly good, without God's help, is most certain; but that we are *compelled* to receive his grace, is a different matter; the very *offer* of it is more than we have any title to expect. But Christ died for the sins of the whole world, that is, for those who repent and call upon Him, and ask for the grace of God that is freely offered to *all* through his merits.

his faith by obedience to God in acts of mercy, through gratitude of heart for the redemption of his soul by the death of Christ, so the man who is not governed by this christian principle, dealeth merely as a *merchant* with his God, bartering his actions and doing every thing for *his own gain*. He does not perform his charity from sincere *love* of God, from a deep sense of *duty*, from consideration that it is *God's creature* that he is relieving, but all the virtue tends to selfish purpose, he hopes to win heaven by the merit of his own works; not attributing the power of doing good to the influence of God's grace, and thereby lowering and making void the price of Christ's blood, who alone hath obtained remission of our sins, and the power of *purifying to himself a people zealous of good works*. The true sense therefore, of all such expressions as these we are defending, whether found in scripture, or the writings of holy men, viz. that *alms do wash away our sins, and mercy to the poor doth blot out our offences*, is simply *this*, that by doing these things according to God's *will* and our bounden *duty* to Him, we have our sins indeed *forgiven* by Him, not for the essential worth of *our actions*, but by the grace or favor of God, which *worketh all in all*; and that *pardon* is also in consequence of his *promise* made to all who are obedient to his word, in order that He who is the truth itself, might be justified in performing what is due to his sacred promise. Charity, or christian-love, doth truly lighten our sins, because God doth condescend to allow it as a *mark* of our purity, when uniformly exercised for *his sake*, and in *honor of his name*; though it contains no actual power in itself to *merit*, or obtain the blessing.

It may happen, that many who are too apt to build upon the worth of their good works, will not be satisfied with this reply. Nor is it at all surprising, for no answer will be able to satisfy such men. We must therefore leave them to their own wilful

wilful notions, and appeal to the sense of our more christian hearers; who, as they must be well assured, that every degree of goodness, perfectness, and mercy; that all blessings, pardon of sin especially, and whatever can be strictly termed virtuous or profitable to either soul or body, proceed alone from God's infinite mercy and free grace, and not from any independent excellence in themselves; so all such, though they do ever so many virtuous actions, are never puffed up with any vain reliance on them. Though they hear and read in God's word what praise is due to truly pious and charitable exertions, and how frequently they are mentioned as blotting out our sins, yet they by no means arrogantly *boast* of them or *trust* in them like the haughty Pharisee in the gospel, but rather with the lowly publican, confess their sinful natures; their great unworthiness of any favor; and hardly daring to look up to heaven, continue begging mercy, that with the humble publican they may be justified by *Christ*. All who have a pure sense of godliness, when the scripture speaketh of good works reconciling us to God's favor, do understand thereby that we are instructed *what* Christ by his mediation and intercession hath obtained for us from the Father, when we prove obedient to his will, viz. *his grace to work out our salvation*. Such expressions, instead of puffing up, or leading into error, afford them comfortable assurance of God's great love towards them by enabling them *so to act*, not attributing *that* to his unworthy creatures, which He, by his good spirit, worketh in them, and by his grace procureth for them. But yet the *very best* are ready to cry out with St. Paul, from inward sense of natural depravity and weakness, *O wretched creatures that we are!*—They are ready to acknowledge, (as their master teaches) that when they *have done all, they are unprofitable servants*; and when they further consider the just judgments of an all-perfect Being,

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Being, they are ready to tremble with the holy David, and to say, *If thou, O Lord, shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who, O Lord, shall be able to abide it?* Thus by abasing themselves, they are exalted in the sight of God: they account themselves most vile, and by their gracious Maker are received as pure and clean. They condemn themselves, and are justified by their Lord and Savior. They judge themselves unworthy to live on earth; and through God's mercy (the mercy which they strive to imitate) they are esteemed prepared for heaven. It is thus God's word doth truly teach us to think correctly of all good works, and that it is through his tender love alone that we are made partakers of the fruits his word hath promised. Let us then never slacken in our imitation of such great and good examples, but chearfully perform such acts of mercy as we are commanded. Let us preserve that just opinion of them that we are taught, and then, like those that are gone before us, we shall experience the rewards that follow all good works, and know by proof of endless happiness, what profit is derived from exercising charity, upon a christian principle. That we may all find grace to possess and cultivate this heavenly virtue, God of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.

DISCOURSE VIII.

The Third Part of the Homily on Charity.

PSALM xxxvii. 25.

*I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen
the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

THE two first heads proposed to be explained to you, in this Homily of Charity, or Alms-giving, have been very fully discussed. In the first, you were shewn that all acts of mercy are truly acceptable to God; for how can it be otherwise, but that a God of mercy should be pleased with the imitation of his own perfection: The *second* division of the subject, declared to you no less expressly, how much it concerns us to *practise* this virtue; and how very advantageous it is to our *best interests*, to be *uniform* and *earnest*, in our discharge of it. The mistakes that have been made, respecting the *genuine character* of charity, were likewise pointed out, and all objections answered, that seemed to lessen its essential value, by setting forth the *principle* by which *alone* it can be qualified and made a *christian virtue*. The third, and last particular, promised to be established, was the removal of all discouragements to this duty, from *worldly* and *selfish* considerations,

dorations, which might interfere to slacken generous exertions, and deaden the ear to the voice of necessity, by shewing, from Holy Scripture, that the charitable person need never be in fear of want *himself*, in consequence of employing *religious* liberality.

Many persons, when they hear how pleasing a merciful disposition is declared to be in the sight of God; and how profitable, at the same time, the practice of it is likely to prove to *themselves*, in that it is capable of conciliating the favor of the Almighty; when, I say, people consider the great advantages flowing from this attainment, it is but natural that they should earnestly desire to be made partakers of such benefits; but still, in too many, who would gladly partake of the *end*, there wants a heart and resolution to employ the *means* of rendering them the objects of God's favor. For numbers, through the depravity of human nature, acting upon the particular complexion or constitution of their frame and habit of mind, discover such a sordid and greedy turn, and are so controuled by covetous affections, that they grudge the *present penny*, for the prospect of a pound in future. They have no idea but of an *immediate* return for any thing they lay out. They have no faith to trust the gospel declaration, *that he who giveth to the poor, lendeth unto the Lord*; or that a morsel of bread and cup of drink, to them who *want* it, is capable of increasing to a *heavenly treasure*. In short, they cannot relish *this* method of procuring the divine favor. Characters like these, have ever a favorite saying that upholds them in hard hearted conduct, *that charity begins at home*; and they are continually afraid, and anxious, lest by being often bountiful, however small the gift, they may so diminish their *own* stock, that perhaps at last, they may stand in need of public charity *themselves*. Is it not evident, that hereby they declare themselves void of
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faith and gratitude, that they have no dependance on God's goodness, and are, besides, deluded by the greatest folly, and self-sufficiency? For who can prevent them from misfortune, if God refuses to bless their industry? To what are they indebted for the very property they now enjoy, but to God's kind permission that it should be so? How unreasonable then is it (should such persons do *otherwise than well*) for them to expect relief or pity, who, to a proverb, have been *unmerciful*? In short, if they would but weigh the encouraging declaration in the text, they would be soon inclined (even on their *own* principles) to strive at a reform of habits, which supply excuses to continue graceless, and rather to yield to the dictates of an avaritious spirit, which does the devil's work upon their minds, than by cultivating the rich grace of *mercy*, to imitate the pattern Christ hath set them, and thereby effect the purifying of their nature. There is no disorder of the soul, that more requires *prayer* to cure it, than this of *covetousness*. Happy they who apply, and find the benefit of this remedy for so infectious and stubborn a disease. It is not like to bodily complaints, the very want of which, must end with our *mortality*; but this *evil* temper so corrupts the mind, as to endanger both soul and body with eternal punishment. But, blessed be God, we have a Friend who is able to remove this inveterate malady also. All, therefore, who feel a tendency to such a disposition, let them betake themselves, in time, to the Great Physician of souls, who is willing to relieve all who come unto him for help, *without money and without price*. Let them diligently seek *Him*, and earnestly beg that, of his mercy, he would instruct them how to subdue so powerful an enemy to their everlasting peace.

Further, as for such who falsely suppose that by being merciful to the needy, they will endanger

their own comforts, let them only attend to the admonitions of Holy Writ upon this subject. Depend upon it, that whatever is spared from your own substance to promote the service of universal charity; whatever is employed in obedience to Christ's precepts, can never be *wanted*, or turn to bad account. All who possess a particle of *christian faith*, must be assured, that what is delivered by the spirit of God, and hath the authority of his holy word, may be relied upon as the *safest* rule to walk by. Solomon informs us, that *whoso giveth to the poor* (provided it be done *freely*, and upon true religious principles), *shall never want*. Men often please themselves with the fancy, that by all manner of care and misery, and continually hoarding up, they shall grow rich at last; and what doth such a practice profit them, when this sentence goeth forth against them: *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall all these things be?* Many may idly think, that God will pardon all the *covetous, pinching, and unfeeling* actions of their lives, because when they cannot keep their wretched gain any longer, they are willing to leave it to the poor; but the latter part of the other admonition intimates, that this may *not* be in *their power*; THEN *whose shall these things be?* that is, when cut off *suddenly*, and consequently without a change of disposition. The *commandment* is, to do good *while we live*, and consequently, to take special care, if we do leave any thing behind us, that it be *well secured* to the appointed and godly purposes we *intended*. But this is what few covetous-minded persons have grace to do; the love of the self itself engrosses their whole affection; it becomes the chief of their cares, their idol, their God. In short, avarice is the most hateful of all vices in the sight of God, and the most unprofitable and injurious to man, in that it deprives the *possessor* of doing good, and the world
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of receiving it; and we may most truly say, if it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, it is scarcely possible for a covetous person to be admitted there. In truth, it is against the hard-hearted, and ungrateful rich man, that this declaration is levelled. Again; so little is the danger of our ever being reduced to want by distributing of our money to godly uses, that the Holy Spirit of God, who knoweth all truth, teacheth us a very different lesson. By Him we are informed, that there is a kind of *expence* that will never lessen our stock, and likewise a kind of *saving*, that in the end shall bring a man (or those belonging to him) to certain poverty. The words of the text afford us hope of the former, and both are confirmed in these words of Solomon, (Prov. x. 3, 4.) *The Lord will not suffer the soul of the merciful to famish, but he casteth away the substance of the wicked. He becometh poor who dealeth with a slack hand, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.* Thus we see the judgments of weak and sinful men differeth widely from the counsels of the spirit of God. St. Paul, who had the gift of the spirit in an eminent degree, and was honored with the most secret revelations of heaven, teacheth us, in 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7, &c. *That he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; that God loveth a chearful giver; that the righteousness of him who hath dispersed abroad, who hath given to the poor, remaineth for ever; and that he who ministereth seed to the sower, will multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness,* that is, if you ask his grace, and employ it sincerely, he will give you yet more, and consequently, the fruits of it will abound to your great joy. The apostle, you see, does not stop at shewing them they should not want, but he goes on to specify in what manner God will bless them; even the being enriched in every thing to all bountiffulness. Now to illustrate the former comparison in a worldly sense. In the same manner as God provided

vided more seed for the sower, by multiplying it, so will he increase the growth of the *merciful*, that they shall possess *abundance*. And to confirm the truth of these sayings, attend to the example, afforded us in the first book of Kings, wherein a most beautiful and convincing instance is related of the good effects of a compassionate, and liberal spirit. We there read of a poor widow of Zarephath, who received the banished prophet of God, Elijah; and though she had but *an handful of meal in a vessel, and a little oil in a cruse, whereof she intended to make a cake for her son and herself*, before she resigned herself to the death the famine threatened, yet because she grudged not to give part of it to Elijah, even checking her own pressing want of hunger, from a merciful disposition to a fellow creature in *like calamity* *, she experienced such an astonishing blessing, through the prophet's prayer, that neither the meal, nor the oil, wasted during all the time the famine continued, but supplied both the prophet, herself, and son, with sufficient nourishment. Every covetous, and unfeeling person, would do well often to recollect this history, and raise their dependance on God's promises, to convince them that his power is never diminished, to help and soften their nature, and to remind them that there

* It may be profitable to observe in this place, that this act of extraordinary benevolence did not proceed merely from the impulse of a humane disposition in this woman's nature; it was qualified by *religious obedience*; for we are told, that she received *the command of God* to exercise this act of merciful preference towards the Prophet; and it is this *principle*, which in the former discourses we have uniformly recommended, as what will render all our good deeds acceptable in the sight of God. It must be love and duty to Him, that must excite our mercy and liberality towards our neighbor, according to the precept of our Saviour, that *as he hath loved us, so should we love one another*. This both proves the necessity, and stamps the *value* of our good works, and renders us *doubly* responsible for the *choice* affections God has pleased to implant in our nature, shewing it incumbent on us likewise to improve them, where they are of less ready growth.

is an universal command in force, that binds us to this duty; from an humble and grateful acknowledgment of our dependance upon God for all our well-doing.

It will be useful, likewise, to reflect still further on the wide difference of this poor woman's case, and that of many, who *lack bowels of compassion* for the necessities of others; for it was not from a *sufficiency*, much less out of *plenty*, that she spared to the misery of the needy; but from the scanty measure of her own *sole support*, and that of him *most dear to her*; and for this reason, her praise and reward (like that bestowed on the widow's mite), is justly magnified. Whereas the obdurate, selfish, and close-handed, are loth to part even from a *trifle* of their *superfluity*, to relieve their miserable and suffering brother. Another valuable observation may be collected from this example, which is also confirmed by gospel precept; we see, that perfect charity is not confined to *place* or *person*; as we are not excused from discharging this duty, even though our means are *small*, so we must strive to copy the pattern of the *supreme benefactor*, whose sun shines on the just and unjust; if *our enemy hunger*, we *are to feed him*, if *he thirst*, to *give him drink*. And if the parable of the Good Samaritan plainly shews us who is our neighbour, even the afflicted *stranger*, no less than those who dwell among us; much stronger must be the obligation to provide for those whose wretched situation affords *continual*, and *immediate* trial of our merciful exertions; and stronger *still* the needy calls of *decayed friends* or *dependent kindred*. But this story of the merciful and obedient widow-woman, is so strikingly affecting and improving, that it will bear *another* review of its peculiar merit.

We behold this forlorn and sorrowing widow, in a time of extreme and universal famine, with only the smallest portion of food remaining, to support

support the life of herself and *only son*, who was ready to perish before her face with hunger. Could there be a *greater trial in nature*? *Self-preservation*, pressed by *want*, is apt to absorb all *other feelings whatsoever*; but it is where *animal nature* craves for *worldly food*, not by a soul that has a relish for the *bread of life*, which is pious resignation to the sovereign will. The spirit of *mercy* had refined her selfish feelings: the suffering cravings of the very dearest object of her heart, only helps to paint still stronger, the necessities of the famishing Prophet; and rather than forbear a work of genuine christian love, or the obedience due to HIM, who hitherto had blessed and comforted her, she was content to shorten that life, for which, in general, we will part with *everything*. Here is a cutting lesson to them who abound in meat and drink, and clothing; some of which, perhaps, is oftener left to *spoil*, than readily bestowed on them, whose miseries might be refreshed from their unprofitable *boards*, and wicked *wastings*. Here is a lesson to them, who lay by riches, and cannot tell *who shall gather them*. Nay, it is a lesson to them who have the *least* of this world's goods; for they who have a *competency*, cannot be likened to the distressful state of this poor widow. Thank heaven, there is *no famine in the land*, yourselves and families in general, are well clothed and fed, and in no danger of dying for *want*. But, alas! the *hearts* of many are so hard, they positively require to *feel* the misery of poverty, of those fainting through hunger, to make them sensible how urgent is the *cries of indigence*. Till then, it is to be feared, too many will multiply excuses, in order to save themselves from succouring the aged, the hungry, and the naked; who are suitors, in the name of Christ, not only for temporal relief, but as instruments to procure their benefactors the *richest treasures, treasures in heaven,*
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where neither moth can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

Let us take pattern then, from the believing widow, whose faith in the Prophet's words, inclined her to afford us such a memorable instance of compassionate attention; she doubted not in her heart, (though tempted by excess of wretchedness), but instantly obeyed the dictates of *pure charity*, while many among us (worse than unbelievers) have been often found, not only to doubt God's sacred *promise*, but to entertain a thousand fears whether our obedience would answer any valuable purpose; whether we may not want ourselves what charity requires of us; or whether what we might spare, may not be employed to some more favourite purpose. It is as hard to wrench a nail out of an oak post (as the proverb has it) as to draw a farthing out of some mens pockets. Many prove they have neither the *love* or *fear* of God before their eyes, when the test of their faith is *liberality of soul*. They will prefer the retention of the smallest sum, to the praise of a benevolent character; nay, to the punishment waiting upon the unmerciful. Let the miserable minded tremble, for the want of such a temper; for as sure as God preserved the woman of Sarepta, and increased her little store, so that she suffered not in the general calamity; so surely will God visit the hard-hearted with some plague or other, though they may for a while live in the *midst of plenty*; but it often happens, that he punishes, by the *same affliction*, the neglect which hath merited the chastisement; for many live to want what they once denied to others in like condition with that, to which God's just appointment hath at length reduced them, as to behold abundance all around them, while they suffer the pangs of exigence. Their glory and riches come to nought; and that, when they had it, they might have secured, by the blessing of God upon their religious
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use of it, hath now *made itself wings*, and is no where to be found, though lamented with tears and sorrow; *With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*, is here prophetic of *their* fate, who have been *slack in mercy, unwilling to distribute*. The stony heart shall have its portion among the stony-hearted. What blind and dangerous infatuation rules all those who will not perceive the truth, or listen to the admonition of the Most High. Christ, in order to soften this desperate obduracy of the human heart, expressly saith, *That whosoever will first seek the kingdom of God, and do the works of righteousness, all other needful things shall be added unto him*: a sure promise that he shall never want. But mark the perverse maxims of a covetous world, they will shut up their bowels of compassion, till they think they have enough for *themselves and families*, (making their own vain desires the standard of the sufficiency) and then they think they shall be inclined to lend an ear to misery. But this is not the trial God appoints; he will not have the comforts of the *body* preferred to the improvement of the *soul*. The care of the latter is the *first* thing to be consulted. We are not (as one of the fathers well observes) to entertain any fear of our *wordly welfare* being injured, in consequence of fulfilling his commandments, while through neglect of a christian frame of mind, we positively expose the health and life of our immortal souls to imminent danger. By so doing, we serve mammon, and forsake God. We dread lest our perishing property should be decreased, but we have no fear of *perishing ourselves*. We do not attend to the spirit of this clear, and unanswerable question, which cannot be too often mentioned, and enforced: *What shall a man profit, though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Thus do people madly prefer what they should set loose to, and *bate* what they should love. They are negligent where they should
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be careful, and provident where there is less need. The ungracious fear of *wanting*, by cultivating a spirit of *mercy*, is as ill grounded as the idlest apprehension of fools or children. Never was there an instance of a man's being reduced to poverty, or *forsoaken of God*, by indulging a merciful conduct, under the influence and direction of christian judgment; but innumerable are the instances of the blessing of the Lord upon the substance of the compassionate soul, as assured in the text, and as may be proved from numberless passages of scripture. Whosoever serveth God constantly, and unfeignedly, in his particular calling, God will not suffer him to decay, much less to *perish*. The Lord teacheth us, by the words of Solomon; That the *son of righteousness* (that is, the *merciful*) *shall not perish for hunger*; and for the same reason, David also thus addresseth the merciful, *O fear ye the Lord, all ye that be his saints, for they that fear him lack nothing*. They who endeavor to please him, by obeying his precepts, they shall want no manner of thing that is good. When the prophet Elijah was even in the *wilderness*, God rendered a raven instrumental to the preserving of his faithful servant; morning and evening he was supplied with sufficient support. Likewise Daniel when condemned by the wicked to the lion's den, for being faithful to his God, the Lord miraculously defended him; and this we may receive as an exact interpretation, and fulfilling of David's saying, *The lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they which seek the Lord, shall want no good thing*, that is, nothing that is absolutely profitable and proper for them; for, in the judgment of the world, the righteous may *seem* to want many things that the vain and wicked think *essential* to happiness, because *they* prefer the delight of the *creature* more than the love of the *Creator*. Thus Daniel, while the beasts that expected to be fed with his flesh, roared for hunger,

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and the desire of the prey, even on which they had no power (though it was present before them), *he*, in the mean time, was supported by God, whose flesh was intended by his enemies for the lions. Thus is the care and love of God exemplified towards all who serve him; and can we doubt, that He will be less mindful of us, if we honor his holy word, and feed his poor who cry unto us for bread? Does He not supply mankind with prosperity far beyond their best deserts? and will He suffer such as trust in him to need the *necessaries* of life? Let us not be *faithless*, but *believing*. Can we suspect, that he who *feedeth* Christ, will be *for-saken* of Christ? and what doth our Lord say; *In as much as ye do it to one of these little ones, ye do it unto ME.* Will He deny *earthly* things to us, to whom, if we obey him, He hath promised *heavenly* things? —NEVER—Let not the busy enemy of your souls persuade you to distrust the Lord. Depend upon it, your charitable deeds will never endanger your temporal welfare. He who is alive to acts of generous pity, shall never experience disgraceful poverty himself. It is expressly contrary to God's own word! to his most holy promises! It is against Christ's nature, as our *friend*; as a God of *love* and *justice* to allow it! The devil only is at the bottom of all such idle and *unworthy* fears. Let us therefore persevere in every act of christian duty, while the day of trial is allotted us, nor ever suffer a suspicion to prevail, that God's goodness will not abundantly defend us from any injury that can possibly follow a charitable course of life. He will never desert us in this short passage to our proper home; and if we pass our time in the exercise of those works which the Lord Jesus Christ hath recommended to us in his *own* example, we shall finally receive the prize of everlasting glory, and live with him for ever, in his blessed kingdom. Our good works, inspired and assisted by his Holy Spirit,

Spirit, will both prepare us *for*, and *follow us* into eternity; and when our day of warfare here is ended, we shall be received by Him who hath obtained the victory for us, with this transporting and promised welcome, *Well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* That we may excite each other continually to good works, and finally attain to this blessed harvest of our christian labour, God of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, To whom, &c.

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DISCOURSE IX.

*An Homily or Sermon concerning the Nativity or Birth of
our Blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

I EPIST. JOHN iv. 9.

*In this was manifested the love of God towards us,
because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world,
that we might live through him.*

OF the various creatures that God made in the beginning of the world, all which were equally excellent as to their particular *uses*, and truly wonderful in their *kind*; the holy scripture assures us, that none was in any respect to be compared to *man*; who as far exceeded all the rest, in the beauty and dignity of his body, and especially in the powers of his mind or understanding, as the sun in the firmament exceeds the smallest star in light and brightness. Nor could it be otherwise, for he was made at *first* after the *likeness of God*, as to that degree of perfection that was necessary to render him *worthy* the work of the great Creator. By the *likeness of God*, is to be understood, that spiritual virtue, that innocence, and holiness of mind, wherein he did resemble his Maker, and not any likeness of his *shape* or *figure* as a *man*. For God is a pure spirit, to whom nothing of human form can possibly be likened. This being the case, man

consequently must have been originally possessed of all manner of divine gifts that were essential to the happiness of his station. He was free from the least taint of *impurity*. He was a perfect creature both within and without. His reason was sufficient to *direct* him; his understanding clear and sound; his will disposed to *obedience* and *godliness*; and in short, we cannot more fully express the several excellencies of his nature, before the fall, than by that description which God inspired his servant Moses to record in Gen. ii. and 7th ver. *So God created him in his own image, in the image of God created he him*; that is, wisdom, truth, and righteousness, and perfect in every capacity.

Thus happily formed, the Almighty, as a mark of his great *love* to man, appointed him a particular part of the earth for his residence, which he called *Paradise*, and which signifies a place of extraordinary delight. In this blessed place he lived in all peace and pleasure, having abundance of every worldly comfort, and wanting nothing that could be really profitable, or essentially gratifying to his wishes. For we are told in the viiith Psalm, and 6th and 7th verses, *God made him to have dominion over the works of his hands, and put all things in subjection under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; to use them at his own discretion, according as his necessities required.* Surely we cannot fail to pronounce him an object of grateful admiration in this state, and that according to our ideas of good, it must have been *completely blissful*. We cannot imagine any possible addition to have been made, or greater temporal happiness to have been bestowed upon him. And this convinces us of the foulness of our first parent's trespass; for, instead of strengthening their gratitude and obedience for all these choice and bountiful endowments, their prosperity and ease ungratefully inclined them to *forget*, (not only
them-

themselves, as being *dependent* creatures, indebted to their Maker for all they had received) but they also forgot God, and his just title to their obedience. And though they had but *one easy commandment* given them, and with the consequence of their disobedience to it, they were most graciously informed, viz. that they should not eat of that fruit which would convey the knowledge of *good and evil* (because in the day they eat thereof, they should most *surely die*) yet they did most carelessly, or rather *wilfully disobey*; breaking that strict and merciful command of the Creator, and yielding to the false and ruinous suggestions of the devil, that wicked spirit, who tempted, and deceived them in the form of a serpent. It came to pass accordingly, that upon the abuse of his free will, man, who before was *blessed*, became *accursed*. As he was naturally beloved, when he reflected the image of his Maker, by his *innocence*, and *perfections*, so now he was as necessarily the object of his *displeasure*; for having defaced that likeness by his rebellion; having been guilty of *sin*, which is hateful to God, as being contrary to his divine nature; it brought on such a *change* of constitution, as exposed him to heavy, and merited punishment. Instead of continuing any longer *beautiful* and *valuable* in the sight of his Maker, as the admirable effect of his *unerring workmanship*, he became vile and wretched, he could no longer stand before Him, but *hid* himself instinctively from his *all pure presence*. Instead of bearing the *image* of God, as at first created, he now bore the image of the *devil* in his *fallen nature*. Instead of a candidate for greater happiness than even that at first bestowed upon him, he became a *slave to sin* and misery; no traces of his former uprightness remained, but being polluted, and degenerated from his *first* estate, he was only capable of following *sin*, and therefore, by the just judgment of an all perfect and all powerful God, he

became subject to the threatened sentence upon his disobedience, even no less than DEATH ETERNAL.

Had the consequence of the transgression affected only the *original offender*, the misery of the plague would not have been so sorely felt. But as in the wise design of God, Adam was ordained to be the father of a race of creatures *like himself*; that is, partaking of the *nature he possessed*, and consequently *perfect*, had he *remained* so; so when he had wilfully corrupted this purer nature, his posterity of course partook of his disorder, by the same laws which had he *kept* his innocence, would have assured them *happiness*. The taint, therefore, became entailed on all his generation to the end of time, so that all who descended from the loins of Adam, experienced the same *effect* of the fall; and inheriting the *sin*, they likewise incurred the *punishment* which their ungrateful progenitor had rashly deserved. And this the apostle St. Paul asserts very plainly, (in the vth chap. of his Epistle to the Romans, 18th and 19th verses) *For by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; and by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: which words most clearly teach us, that as by Adam sin entered into the world, in that all men sin, and come short of the glory of God, which they would have shewn had they continued according to their first creation by him; so all men equally inherit the reward or consequence of sin, that is, become mortal, or are subject to death: having in themselves, through this change of nature, no prospect but to be cut off from this life by sickness, when the body is worn out, or by accident to which it is continually exposed; and hereafter to be shut out from the face of the Almighty; because nothing impure or sinful can stand before him and live. And this state, in fact, is the utmost of eternal death or misery, as to the worst possible description that can be formed of it.*

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The Psalmist also describes the fallen state of man in these most grievous terms, Psalm xiv. 4. *They are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become abominable; there is none that doth good, no not one.*

Nothing can afford us a stronger proof of the dreadful nature of sin, than that a single violation of God's law should tend in itself to destroy the whole race of man: and which makes good St. James's assertion, that *to offend in one point renders us guilty of all*; for one deviation from the rule of right, introduced the whole body of sin. So incapable were our first parents of *themselves*, after having forfeited God's favor, of any recovery, that but for his gracious and unbounded love in the redemption, they must have yielded to the power of sin continually in this life, and after having paid the debt of death in this nature, have for ever experienced the unavoidable punishment that is due to it. A most woeful state, to fall from life to death; from bliss ineffable, to as certain ruin; from heaven, in short, to hell!

Having now laid before you this short history of man's creation and his fall, you will be better prepared to taste the boundless goodness of the Creator in his regeneration or recovery. Though the creature, as has been shewn, had by wilful wickedness occasioned himself to be driven from the sight of his Maker, and necessarily to be separated from his love or notice, yet God, in the depth of his mercy and infinite wisdom of his fore-knowledge, had provided for this otherwise irrecoverable condition of the sinner. He ordained a new covenant, which is by distinction, called the covenant of *grace* or free favor. It is styled *free*, because man, instead of having any way *deserved* it, had on the contrary made a *covenant with death and ruin*. The bond or pledge of this covenant, treaty, or engagement, was the sure *promise* that God would in due time send the MESSIAH, that is,

an anointed or chosen person into the world, as an advocate or friend that should *mediate* between God and man, and who should be of sufficient *worth* and *authority* to afford a ransom to the offended party; to remove the effect of that displeasure against the creature that sin had caused, and thereby to deliver mankind from the heavy curse and wretched condition wherein they were involved by *disobedience to the law of God*. In other words, God's infinite power and goodness had pre-ordained the defeat of Satan's utmost malice, by appointing from all eternity the gracious and infallible means of reconciliation to his fallen helpless creatures. To this blessed hope, did all the *fathers* look. This was the consoling object of their faith; and by this faith they all were sanctified and justified. To *Him* did they look, who was anointed with the spiritual and inward unction of grace and the Holy Ghost, and of which the outward anointing of the kings, priests, and prophets, was but a *sign* or *figure*.

This covenant and promise was *first* made to Adam himself, *immediately* upon his fall: as we read, in the *iiid* chap. of Genesis, where God thus declares himself to the serpent; *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*: By which is signified the conflict between *grace* and *sin*, and the victory of Christ, the promised seed, over *sin* and the *grave*. In due order of time, the same covenant was *fully* and *clearly* held out to *Abraham*; wherein God promised him, that in *his seed*, or family, *all nations of the earth* should be blessed, Gen. xii. And so stedfastly did Abraham believe the same, that he is therefore honored with the title of the *friend of God*, and *father of the Faithful*. It was again continued and confirmed to Isaac, in the same form of words, as it had been to his father, as we read in the *xxvith* chap. of Genesis, and part of the

the 3d and 4th verses, *I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*; this was a prophecy that Christ in due time should descend from that particular family, according to his *fleshy nature*.

God, in mercy to man's infirmity, and that his servants might never have reason to *despair*, but always be possessed of a substantial *hope*, continued uniformly to declare the same, through all succeeding ages, by many and different testimonies of his holy prophets, who, in order to convince the people more fully of the *certainty* of this *expectation*, were so particular, as to describe the very *time, place*, and exact *circumstances* of the birth of this promised Savior, or Messiah: They foretold the afflictions of his *life*, the singular manner of his *death*, and the glory of his *resurrection*: They further predicted the establishment of his kingdom upon earth, the deliverance of his people, with every other essential information that could concern this interesting event; but on the present occasion it is expedient to be more *particular* as to the relation of this inspired foreknowledge in God's servants: Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah should be born of a *virgin*, and be called *Emmanuel*; that is, *God with us*. The prophet Micah foretold, that he was to be born in *Bethlehem*, a place in Judea. Ezekiel assures us, that he was to descend from the stock and lineage of David. Daniel declares, that all nations and languages shall serve him. Zechariah foretells the extraordinary instance of his humble condition, that he should appear in a low estate, and come riding upon so humble a beast of burden as an *ass*. Malachi prepares us for his reception, by specifying the birth and office of John the Baptist, who was represented under the title of Elias or Elijah; and to close the list of prophetic evidence at this time, Jeremiah prophesied, that this blessed person should be sold for *thirty pieces of silver*, and many
other

other things concerning him. Now all this was ordered by God, that his *promise* and covenant made unto Abraham, and to his generation, in respect to the redemption of the world, might not want every valuable and possible foundation for the *strengthening our faith* in his word; for as St. Paul expresses himself, *When the fulness of time was come*, that is, that particular, or proper season, after a course of many years, which God in his wisdom had appointed from the *beginning*, and knew would be the *best* to answer all his holy purposes: THEN, according to his first covenant and promise, he sent the *Messiah*, or *Mediator* and Savior, into the world to prove the truth of all his former promises, and to lay the foundation of the kingdom of heaven upon earth (even the glad tidings of the gospel), which should prepare the people for the inheritance of an *eternal kingdom*, and which they were in a better capacity of receiving, by all these various promises and prophecies being accomplished, than ever they were at any other previous time. It was in *this* sense the *fulness* of time, because it was the *best* in God's sight for the fulfilling all these wonderful predictions.

Further,—The mediator which the Almighty at this time appointed to shew men the way of salvation, was not such an imperfect advocate as *Moses*, *Joshua*, or *David*, but such a one as had power to *deliver mankind* from the bitter curse of the law against sin; of whom the above celebrated characters were *types*, or *signs*, to represent the *future office* of our Blessed Redeemer. He had provided us *such* a mediator as was capable by the *dignity of his person*, to make satisfaction through his death, *for the sins of the whole world* who believe and call upon his name, and shall have an interest in the merits of his sufferings, for it was no less a person than his dear, and only son Jesus Christ, *who was made* (as the apostle saith) *of a woman under the law*,

law, that he might be so far qualified to *redeem them that are under the law*, and make them the children of God by *adoption*.

Surely it must strike all who have ever considered the dreadful state of creatures under the displeasure of their Maker, as the most marvelous and gracious mark of divine love, to afford such offenders any opportunity of recovery, who, when after wilful rebellion, they became open enemies to God, and naturally children of *wrath*, and exposed to all the terrible and unavoidable consequences of sin, were yet regarded as objects of his *compassion*. The apostle St. John exalteth this mercy justly in the words of the text, *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him: Herein was true love, such as only a God could shew,—not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins; and St. Paul speaks to the same purpose, in magnifying this astonishing instance of the divine favor to degenerated, and otherwise lost creatures, Rom. v. 6, 7. For when we were yet without strength (being fallen, and having lost all that power and hope originally afforded us), in due time Christ died for the ungodly; that is, most seasonably in their stead. Now, as the apostle argues in proof of this necessary and gracious appointment for our salvation, Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; in other words, few among the children of men are willing to give such a token of love with respect to the most upright and benevolent of their brethren, as to redeem his life at the expence of their own*;*

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* I think the Apostle's words will admit of a still stronger sense, and one equally obvious to demonstrate the expediency and power of Christ's death; for we may interpret them thus: that hardly would any one die for the *righteous*, since it does not appear to be a matter of necessity, for if man's nature had retained any disposition to good

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yet (adds he) *peradventure* for a good man some would even dare to die, for one by whom they have received good, or been highly benefited; whereas the love of God rises in value and admiration in that he redeemed us at so *dear a rate*, when we were lost to all goodness, in that Christ died even for the worst of sinners. By these plain comparisons, and just praises, do the apostles gratefully exalt the glory of the Redeemer, and continually remind us of the eternal obligation we owe to God for blessing us with such an amazing proof of his tender love towards us; in truth it exceeds the power of words to declare, or the heart to conceive, the benefits derived to us from the *coming of this Savior*; for that the Almighty should commission so exalted a person as Christ the Lord to descend from *heaven*, to obtain our *peace*, is a *miracle of love* that may well astonish the very inhabitants of heaven.

And now having laid before you the fatal *cause* that separated us from God, and the *necessity* of being redeemed, to obtain a place again in his favor; and also having endeavoured *sincerely*, however faintly, to describe the magnitude of the blessings prepared for us, (I say *faintly*, for the tongue of men and angels is unequal to the task of *proper* praise) it may profit us to take a view of the wretched blind-

after the fall, there would have been no *occasion* for such an extraordinary method to effect his regeneration; that is, to *renew* in him a power of *recovery*. Had he continued possessed of any hope of regaining his Maker's favor by his own exertions only, there would have been no necessity for a *mediator*, or for any one to *die in his stead*; and indeed Christ's own words on another occasion help to support this sense, *I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance*. The full spirit of the Apostle's argument therefore seems to be this, that if it is rare, or hard, to find a man that will lay down his own life to save a neighbour's, though ever so honest, and good a person, (since it must be a most eminent friend and benefactor indeed, that will make one ready to suffer death for him); how wonderful then must be the *love* of God in Christ towards mankind, who so freely died for us (not as for good men, much less as benefactors), when *rebels* and *enemies*, to reconcile us to God.

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ness of those people, who though honored by their relationship to the Messiah *according to the flesh*, and the continual promise of the Most High, yet rejected him when he came, and dispute to this day the value of his testimony, that *he came from the Father*. Wherefore God hath given them up to a deluded heart, and confirmed the truth of *our* faith, by the accomplishment of another prophecy of the *Son himself*, viz. that their nation should be scattered upon the face of the whole earth, and should be no longer a people, as heretofore distinguished and protected by the mighty power of God.

The Jews, like many unbelievers now a days, were prejudiced by *outward appearance*, and the *pride* of human reason. The vanity and love of costly things, from the pomp of which they figured all their hopes and expectations of the Messiah's birth and reign, so blinded them against the pure sense of the scripture prophecies, that becoming sordid, and worldly in their views and wishes, they could not comprehend the *spiritual* excellence of his appearing, and the essential virtue of his message. Upon these principles they deny that Jesus, the son of the virgin Mary, is the true Savior that is to come into the world, who was so long promised, and foretold by all their prophets. Proud, stiff-necked, and rebellious, as they are described by the word of God itself, they still look for *another* Savior. They deceive themselves with their vain hopes, that *their* Messiah shall yet come; not as Christ did, (meek and lowly, and riding on the foal of the most contemptible of all animals) but that his entrance into the world will, on the contrary, be with all the power, with all the regal pomp and grandeur, of a valiant and mighty prince. That instead of being attended with a few humble fishermen, and other characters of no distinction, he will be surrounded with a formidable army of warriors; with a splendid train of honorable men, according to the estimation of *this* world's glory;
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and especially, far from being deserted, and basely put to death, as our suffering Jesus was, they depend upon his universal victory over their enemies; and that by the success of his heroism, he will establish such an invincible kingdom upon earth, as never yet was seen from the beginning of time. But alas! while puffed up, and deluded by such vain imaginations of their own conceiving, they deceive themselves, and by the unworthy and false character they form of Christ, they make good the Apostle's report of their delusion; for it is on this account (saith St. Paul) that *Christ crucified is unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness*; because in the blindness and ignorance of their proud hearts, they cannot reconcile it to their own narrow reason, that the Redeemer of the world should be so unworthily treated; not only despised, reviled, and falsely condemned, but even ACTUALLY executed without a just cause. This, as they consulted the letter, more than the spirit of prophecy, seemed strange and improbable in their eyes, and therefore being unwilling to be taught wisdom in God's own way, they were left to themselves, and the vail is still upon their heart as at first, so as not to believe and confess that *Jesus Christ is the true Savior of the world*.

But happily for us, we are members of that community, which possess a different faith; for all who hope and expect to be saved must both steadfastly believe, and bodily confess likewise that this same Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was the *true Messiah and Mediator*, that God promised so long before to send into the world; and that this same holy person whom the Jews crucified, God hath made both Lord and Christ. It must be the business of our lives, as christians, to pray for the strengthening that saving faith in the angel's testimony, of Christ's ascension up to glory; that the same Jesus shall so come in like manner to redeem our bodies at the last day, as the Apostles saw him ascend,

ascend, to receive the glorious recompence of fulfilling his Father's will. We must pray for *such* a faith as to make us so far his *now*, as to be fitted for his *appearing*, and that we may be truly able to rejoice at it. For as St. Paul speaks to the Romans xth chap. and 10th verse, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* And surely most deeply doth it concern us all to pray for such a faith, since the Apostle tells us, that *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*: that is, if in the possession of a true and living faith, not according to the mere letter, as our Savior himself condemns in these words: *Not every man that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, (that have only a nominal relation to me) but they who have obtained that faith which inclines them to do the will of my Father, who is in heaven.* In short, we must have such a firm and serious belief in Christ, as forms a ground of all sincere obedience to his spiritual laws. St. John doth likewise confirm the necessity of this faith, as the condition of our salvation. For *whosoever* (saith he) *shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God; and consequently, he will be disposed to all manner of good works.* But as, according to St. Paul, *no one can say that Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Ghost,* (that is, can possess this faith otherwise than as the gift of God) so doth it behove us to petition earnestly for unction of that blessed Spirit of divine grace, that we may experience the witness of the Spirit in our hearts.

The glorious event then, that we meet to celebrate on every return of this anniversary of our Savior's coming in the flesh, is the memorial of the glad tidings of great joy, which was to be to all people, even the birth of this holy child Jesus, which brought peace and good will towards men, and we cannot be too careful to receive with grateful praise
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and religious joy, this first proclamation of our Redeemer's entrance into the world. We cannot be too devout in our supplications to the Almighty, that we may cultivate a true sense of such great and condescending love towards his creatures, as to suffer the Beloved of his glory to endure the weakness of *infancy*; the miseries of a *low condition*; the slights and injuries of his own *kindred*, according to the flesh; and the atrocious barbarity of his ungrateful *enemies*; in order by these various sufferings to atone for our sins, and to obtain for us an inheritance of endless life and glory. Whoever doth duly weigh the nature of this happy season, will be far from prostituting it to the purposes of *sinful mirth*. A time of joy and rejoicing it *truly* is, but of the most *serious nature*. It was never designed as a season of brutal, and carnal festivity, but of *holy praise*. Every exertion of customary indulgence should be qualified by frequent thoughts upon the real nature of the *good tidings* we have had this day recorded to us in God's holy word. No season can afford a more proper opportunity for every exercise of benevolence and generosity to the poor, as far as is consistent with our *means*, and in proportion as the Lord hath blessed our several situations, above those of our needy brethren. No circumstance can more powerfully remind us of christian love and charity, than those in which the Savior of the world preferred to be born. With *them* he drew his first human breath; with *them* he lived his whole active life; to *them* he preached; and in our regard to *them*, he solemnly declares, our love to *him* is profitably shewn. It is a choice season likewise, whereon to celebrate the blessed feast of his consubstantial love, where *rich and poor do meet together*, at his table, to commemorate the universal and tender mercies of their common Lord and Master. HERE, we make *no* distinction; we all fall down before him, as equally undeserving sinners; we all eat of the

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the same bread, and drink of the same cup; and humbly trust to be washed in the same fountain, for sin and all uncleanness. *Thither* let us ever cheerfully repair, with humble, sure, and joyful hope, that our sincere obedience to our Lord's commands will graciously be accepted. This is the sacrament to renew our christian graces; to preserve us from future dangers; to prove our love to Christ; and that we do truly wish to be counted in the number of his fold. He is the good Shepherd that laid down his life for us. O, let us not refuse to *obey his voice*, now calling us, by this holy ceremony, to *confess his name*, and to partake of *his salvation*; lest if, alas! we slight the offer *now* held forth to us, he should justly leave us to *ourselves*, and having no other name or means, whereby we can be saved, we pass this our day of trial in blindness and false security, and in the day of his second coming to reward or punish, this tender, inviting, condescending Lord, be changed into a just and terrible Judge, who will deny He ever knew us, and deservedly *be ashamed of us for ever*. Rather then, let us gladly meet the terms on which he has so bountifully promised to accept us, to forgive us our sins, and to admit us into the number of his chosen people; that we may obtain faith to call upon Him to saving purposes, *as that he may be one with us, and we with Him*. Amen, Lord Jesus! so touch the hearts of all who desire to love and fear thee, that we may glorify thee as the Almighty Lord and Savior, both in this life and in the eternal kingdom of God the Father; to whom with the Holy Spirit, three persons and one God, be all praise, power, and dominion, for ever and ever, Amen.

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DISCOURSE X.

Second Part of the Homily on the same Subject.

Same Text.

AS the subject of Christ's transcendent love to sinners can never be exhausted, by any who feel the need and blessing of his *healing peace*, we will proceed to some *further* observations, and scriptural authorities, which may be profitable for your instruction on the history of the glorious event that was appointed by God to happen, as on this joyful day. The principal matter of the former discourse being interrupted by a suitable exhortation, respecting the incumbent and solemn service we annually perform, in honor of our blessed Savior, at this particular season; we will now return to a closer consideration of that passage in St. John's 1st epistle, iv. 15. which lays the foundation of our hope of grace and pardon, through the Redeemer's merits; *Whoever* (saith he) *shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* There can be no doubt, but that all true christians do *perfectly agree in this.* But that you may be able to give a good account of the faith that is in you, it may be of advantage to you, at this time, to be supplied with a few more proofs from the sacred oracles, upon this leading article

of the christian faith, that you may be persuaded in *your selves* of the deadly error of all those, who would dispute the truth of this doctrine, and also be qualified to *oppose* the *gain sayers* (whether Jews or unbelievers) with arguments that cannot be withstood. And to be as short as possible so important an inquiry will admit: First, our faith herein is confirmed by the testimony of the angel Gabriel, who was sent from heaven to declare, as well to Zachariah the high priest, as to the blessed virgin *herself*, the divine relation and character of the man Christ Jesus to the Almighty Father. Secondly; John the baptist, that express messenger, or fore-runner, who was raised up, *miraculously*, to do honour to Christ's *mission*, directs us to the Divine Power who was to come after him, in these plain words: *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.* Now, who could take away the sins of the world but God, against whom alone the trespass was committed? If the creature could no ways justify *himself* for his *own* sins, how is it possible that man *alone* could reconcile for the sins of the *whole world*? Thirdly; we have the confirming witness of God the Father *Himself*, who to enforce the authority of the Redeemer, and to take off any doubt as to his nature and commission, did most graciously and wonderfully declare it publicly to the people, by a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* HEAR HIM, and as the last miraculous sanction, necessary to be mentioned at this time, we have the open witness of the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Ghost, who descended upon Christ in a visible form, that denoted his spotless nature, in order to anoint and qualify him, by this spiritual baptism, for the work in which he had engaged.

Many more substantial proofs might be advanced to establish our faith in this point, such as the declaration of the Wise Men, who were divinely di-

rected to worship him, and pay him honor; the inspired testimonies of Simeon and Anna, of Andrew and Philip, Nathanael and Peter, Nicodemus and Martha; and several others, which it would be needless to specify at present, especially as the above are abundantly persuasive to those who are willing to receive the light, and walk in it.

Now, in every attempt to *space* our faith in the eternal Son of God, and the power of his redemption, we may ever be sure, that our *bitterest enemy* is at the bottom, as the chief instigator of the instrument to ruin us. For, he knowing this is the *christian's strong hold, whereto he may always resort*, he would fain discourage him from his only hope, that so he may deprive him of the eternal happiness in store for all believers. Take refuge, then, even upon the most crafty assaults of the enemies of your holy religion; and exercising your minds upon the above, and other convincing assurances of Holy Writ, which contain such virtue in them, as to establish and promise all them, who humbly and devoutly lean upon their authority, which declares that the very gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against them, if their faith is pure. These are the words of the Master himself, and on which we may safely trust, and the evidence here offered, should make us all exult in the truth of this grand principle, that as sure as the Almighty liveth, who made the world, and all things in it, so surely was Christ Jesus the true, and ONLY Savior that ever did, or ever will appear, even the same Blessed Person who, as on this day, was born of the Virgin Mary, who was produced by the miraculous power of God, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, without the natural means of carnal generation.

And here it may be proper to make a few observations upon the *divine nature* of our Lord, because, through the malice and subtlety of satan,

many false and ruinous opinions have prevailed in the world, at different times, upon this subject, and even to this day; are artfully and profanely propagated in our land, to the subverting of weak and ignorant persons from a saving faith in Christ; and which indeed, could they be proved, must overthrow the very foundation of all our hope of pardon, and defeat the whole evidence of Holy Writ. But christians being persuaded that the Scripture is the *word of God*, and that from the very nature of the Deity, he cannot *deceive* us, do most wisely prefer the revelation of the Almighty, to the vain, shallow, and wicked reasoning of sinful dust and ashes, who with abominable pride would set up for greater wisdom than the Most High. All, therefore, who argue against the divinity of Christ's nature, argue like *jacks and madmen*, against the *best and only ground* of their deliverance from the power and punishment of sin. However high their *names*; however great their *talents and learning*; however specious their outward *manners*, they at *heart* are UNBELIEVERS; puffed up with vain conceits, and, whether they know it or not, under the influence of God's enemy, and their own: who, in his wiliness, takes them in the snare of their own proud prejudices, and unprofitable disputations; and the best that can be said of them is, they are infatuated to believe, and propagate a *lie*.

The Scriptures then, being our *rule of faith*, by them we must abide, if we would deserve the character of *real christians*, or wish to inherit eternal life, according to the promises held out to us under this title. They most clearly teach us, that the person of our Lord Jesus Christ consisted of two different natures, being really *God* and really *man*; that is, He had a divine and human nature in one person. The *first* we prove, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit communicated to St. John,

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(1st ch. 1st and 2d verses) *In the beginning* (says he) *was the word*, (that is, Christ, before He came in the flesh,) *and the word was with God, and the word was God, the same was in the beginning with God.* Nothing can be more clear, or less liable to mistake than these words, to prove the divinity of Christ. The Apostle speaketh by the same spirit, in the 14th verse, with equal plainness and truth: *And the word* (that is, the second person in the Holy Trinity) *was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.* The Apostle St. Paul affirmeth the same in different words, (Rom. viiith and 3d.) *For what the law could not do* (towards the salvation of the creature) *in that it was weak through the flesh,* (which had forfeited the power of keeping it) *God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.* Now it must be evident, God's own Son, before he sent him into the world, could have no other but a divine nature, and it being here expressly said, He sent him in the likeness of sinful flesh*, therefore both Christ's divine and human nature are most fully proved as mystically united in the God-man on earth.

Another strong and clear text to satisfy us on the real existence of the two natures in Christ our Savior, is to be found in iid. Phil. and 6th. Christ, says this Apostle, *being in the form of God,* (in his former heavenly state) *thought it not robbery to be equal with God†; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the LIKENESS OF MEN.* That is, He humbled himself so greatly, as to become a man, without which He could not have suffered as a man, or for men.

* That is, he sent him in a human form, and not that he had any sin himself.

† Which is as much as to say, both the Father and Son were one God.

(And why is it in general that men deny and oppose this truth? Because they do not understand it, as they think they do other things. They would, though confessedly frail and degenerated creatures, be above the very angels in knowledge. They say it is a *mystery*, and so most truly it is, and proposed to us, as a test of our *faith* in God's superior wisdom. And to this St. Paul further agrees, in this additional proof of the point in question, (1 Tim. iii. 16.) *and without controversy, (that is, I do not deny) great is the mystery of godliness; (of God's ways to save men) for God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up again into glory.* In another place the same Apostle says, (1 Tim. ii. 5.) *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.* To assure ourselves further then, as to

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These words may help to illustrate the obscurity of that difficult passage of "a mediator not being a mediator of one, but God is one;" for by the sense of the above words, they appear to mean God himself, which is rendered still more evident by this declaration, (2 Cor. v. 18.) *That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto HIMSELF;* therefore God was the mediator HIMSELF—or in other words, the mediator of one—THE mediator—The only essential mediator, and not like any human mediator, as Moses and others, &c. who only acted as *emblems* or *types* of the Great Mediator. And this text doth further prove the *divinity* of Christ, according to the assertion of our Lord himself, "I and my Father are one." But in the common acceptance of the word mediator, as understood of Moses, &c. they were not mediators of one, or acting for themselves to satisfy themselves, as God did, through the mediation of Jesus Christ; but they were only as *proxies*, as mediators, as propounders of the law which was added, and delivered through their hands, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; that is, till Christ by the mystical union of the divine and human nature, should complete the mediation in his own person, and prove himself the one glorious mediator, God incarnate. The one all-sufficient mediator, or reconciler for the universal apostasy of man. In short, God blessed for evermore. I should not have dwelt so long upon this subject, but that these deep things of God are so essential to our salvation to be believed, (though surpassing our limited understandings minutely to comprehend,) that it behoves us occasionally to consider them most seriously, that we may prove

the reality of Christ's *human* nature, let us only attend to the properties of his *actions*. No one will deny but that he experienced the calls of *hunger* and *thirst*; and that he gratified these natural appetites, by the usual means of *food* and *drinking*. We know he was subject to *fatigue*, and relieved his bodily weakness like other men by *rest* and *sleep*. And how can we for one moment doubt of his *actually* partaking of our nature, when it is recorded that he was susceptible of *affection* and *sorrow*? Did he not weep over Lazarus, and over Jerusalem? Did he not submit to pay tribute like other men? Did not his manner of preaching to the poor argue his full possession of the powers of the human mind? And in short, his sense of bodily pains, and actual death upon the cross, compose such a part of proof of his being *very man*, that nothing short of wilful obstinacy and downright infidelity, can hold out against it. It is from these natural properties, that our Lord is called in Scripture the *Son of David*, and the *Son of man*, as also sometimes the *Son of Mary*, and the *Son of Joseph*. Again, concerning the particulars that may convince us of his *divine nature*, they are equally satisfactory to all true and humble professors of christianity. For he who had power to *forgive sins*, to *work miracles*, to cast out *evil spirits*, to heal all manner of *diseases* with a single word: He who knew the thoughts of the hearts of men; who commanded the fury of the sea, who could walk on the water as on dry ground; in short, who could bring the dead to life; who rose again himself from the dead, and visibly in his real body, ascended into Heaven, may prove ourselves whether we *be in the faith or not*, and to evince our *humility* which is the soul of christianity. What is beyond our mortal powers to investigate, or account for, we must *trust* for the truth of God's *revelation* of it, but that of which we may fully judge, viz. the natural conclusions from scriptural assertions, it concerns us both to examine and support.

surely

surely with reason be believed in as *VERY GOD*, and that in him dwell the fulness of the Godhead bodily. When therefore he instructs us himself on this subject, he speaks most plainly thus, *I and my Father are ONE*, John x. 30. Observe, he is there speaking of his Godhead; but when he is discoursing of his human nature, he as truly says, *My Father is GREATER than I*, (John xiv. 28.) How shall the whole tribe of heretics of the former, or the present day, be able to stand before such positive testimony as these afford, and innumerable other passages would confirm? It is impossible they can, without recourse to such subtleties and perplexities as could never be worthy of God to propose to the general knowledge of mankind, or by denying the Scriptures altogether; with these weapons we may safely defend ourselves against the keenest and darkest attacks of *Arians*, *Secinians*, and the latest and boldest sons of antichrist. This is the sword of the *spirit*, which we may be sure to employ to victory.

And that you may want no possible means of comprehending the faith and abiding by it, it may be further advantageous to your stock of christian information to *reason* on the subject. Let us consider briefly then, the several *causes* that rendered it expedient for our Savior to come in all *humility* in the *flesh*, and even suffer death upon the cross for sinners.

The necessary method of our salvation did clearly require *such* a mediator and redeemer, as under *one person* should be partaker of *both natures*. In other words, the nature of our deliverance from the bondage we had incurred, made it requisite that Christ should be a *man*; for as the transgression came *by man*, so it was just and unavoidable that all possible satisfaction should be *made by man*; and because death, according to St. Paul, is the *wages of sin*, therefore to satisfy the *justice* of God, by a discharge of the debt, and the demand of the law,

law, it was no less necessary that our mediator should be such a one as might be *capable of suffering* the penalty due to the sins of mankind; by so far taking upon him their sins in this sense, as to submit to the *punishment* they deserved, for sin he could have none *himself*, or he could not have paid a pure and perfect ransom.

There was, besides, this *further* reason for Christ's appearing in the *flesh*, and of ascending into heaven with the *very body* that was buried, that thereby he might hold out to every faithful follower that truly trusts in him, the blessed *hope* of entering into the same glory which the mighty captain of his salvation hath obtained. And lastly, he condescended to *humble* himself to the putting on of human nature, that from him we might receive the greatest possible *comfort*, while in this earthly tabernacle, as well in all our *prayers* as all our *troubles*; knowing that we have not an *advocate* and *high priest*, who cannot be *touch'd with the feeling of our infirmities*, but who *having been in all points tempted, like as we are, yet was without sin*, (in consequence of the indwelling spirit of his *divine nature*) and who hath still, in that same glorified body with which he ascended into heaven, the most compassionate sense of our *weakness*. And this leads us to a few more interesting considerations of our Lord's *divine nature*.

Now because no merely human being can possibly inherit sufficient virtue and power to triumph over *death*; to give *life*; to destroy the power of *hell*, and obtain *heaven*; to pardon *sin*; and convey the gift of *righteousness*, or *regeneration of mind*: It was therefore absolutely expedient likewise, that the Messiah, whose immediate office was to undergo, and accomplish all those *several engagements*, should not only be truly *man*, but *VERY God in man*; for otherwise, he never could have made a *full and perfect satisfaction* for the offence of mankind, in all *respects* that were required. In other words, and to speak

Speak most *scriptural*ly, he could not otherwise have *reconciled the world to himself as God*: and as a convincing proof, that he *did* completely fulfil the work his Father had sent him to do, we have the record of this miraculous assurance declared by God himself from Heaven (as I believe was adduced in proof before), *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**.

Thus do the holy scriptures plainly shew us, that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, or Savior of the world: That he was very God, and very man; and also, the positive expediency of his being so.

In order, then, to move our bounden gratitude to the Almighty, all that remains upon this subject is to review the many and great benefits that we may derive from the nativity or birth of Jesus Christ our Lord.

First, It will help our exercise of becoming-praise, frequently to reflect, that though all such as lived by faith in the promises, and sincerely followed the degree of light they had received, have doubtless found an interest in that sacrifice, that was made from the beginning of the world, yet by Christ's *coming in the flesh*, a wonderful *increase* of light and comfort was added to that *hope*, as well as *power*, to fulfil the precepts of the gospel. Formerly men lived *alone* by faith, but by *this* event they were blessed with the *sight* of what their forefathers would have rejoiced to see accomplished. *Before* Christ's coming into the world, we may truly say, the nations of the earth were so univer-

* Which words will bear this obvious construction, that by the whole conduct of Christ, God was fully reconciled to us, in his character of the *son of man*, and still much more so, in that he was the *son of God*, (ever ready in all things to obey his Father's gracious will) for he was most truly *God-man*, *God in man*, or *God with us*; in whom, God being himself, he necessarily was *well pleased*, and with whom (if we cherish a true faith in him) he will freely give us all things.

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fully corrupted, through original sin, that the following scripture comparisons do most justly describe their case: They were a *stubborn, wicked, and crooked generation; unfruitful trees; a stony soil, full of thorns and briars; They were as lost sheep; prodigal sons; unprofitable servants; unjust stewards; workers of evil; a nest of adders; blind guides; sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and in short, the children of wrath.* A most dreadful picture, but no ways forged, for this is exactly our state by nature, as described both by St. Paul and Christ himself: But behold the blessed change!—Upon his visit to the sons of men, all who believed in his authority, and were guided by his word, became heirs of his kingdom of righteousness, elect of God; they might be compared to *good trees, pleasant branches, fruitful ground, sheep of his fold, members of his body, his faithful friends and brethren; in short, children of light and grace;* for thus St. Peter (1 Ep. ii. 24.) expressly describes their happy change, together with the cause of the improvement: *For he his ownself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that being dead to sin we should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed, for before we were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the shepherd and bishop of our souls.* St. Paul likewise gives a similar testimony to the truth of our renewal in Christ (Titus iii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.): *For we ourselves, says he, were also sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, and hating one another: But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life; and in many other parts of scripture these great and precious gifts are set be-*
for

fore our eyes as in a mirror. These were *some* of the benefits of Christ's nativity. We may now proceed to consider and admire the *further* ends of his coming; and these, according to the express words of the gospel, were *to save his people; to fulfil the law* for us; to bear witness to the truth, to teach and preach the words of his Father, to give light to the whole world, and (in excess of mercy) to *call sinners to repentance*; to refresh all that labor and are heavy laden, to cast out the prince of this world, to reconcile us to God, in the body of his his flesh, to destroy the works of the devil, and in few words, to become a sacrifice and satisfaction for our sins, and not for *ours* only, but for the sins of the whole world, who shall believe in him. Now in all this, the blessed Lord of light and glory could have no profit but to display the riches of his *mercy*, which he did at the expence of his most precious blood, for our sakes, that we might know the will of God, be made partakers of his grace, be released from the just punishment of sin, delivered from the power of satan, our deadly foe, justified by his death, and at last received up into everlasting glory.

Is it possible that any one can dwell upon these inestimable effects of our Savior's birth, and not be *grateful*? Is the service of our *whole* lives too much to honor *such* a Savior, and prepare ourselves for such a share of *happiness*? Will any, boasting of his *name*, and fondly looking to his favor, refuse the *easy*, loving command he has laid upon us to *fit* ourselves for his reception? Shall we refuse *his* call who became a pilgrim upon earth to make us citizens of heaven? who became the son of *man* to make us sons of *God*? who became obedient to the holy law, to save us from the *curse* of it? who submitted to poverty to make us *rich*? who consented to be made *vile*, that we should be valued? and subject to *death*, that we might live for ever? What depravity,

depravity, blindness, and ingratitude, must *they* possess, who can remain dead to such astonishing marks of love for sinful creatures! O! let it not appear (by any wilful disobedience) that Christ hath died *in vain* for us! but on the contrary, let us shew that we are renewed in our nature, through the unction of his spirit, by every test of gratitude in our power. Let us truly *love, fear, obey, and serve* him, as is both our *interest* and our *duty*: Let us confess and adore him with our *lips*, believe on him in our *hearts*, and honour him by our *lives*. Christ is our *light*; let us not madly *hide* ourselves from receiving it: he is the *truth*; let us gladly embrace it: he is the *way* to life; let us follow that blessed path: We are Christ's soldiers and servants; let us prove it, by making war continually with *his* enemies and *ours*, which are the devil, the world, and the flesh; let us labor to shake off that yoke which enslaved us to our bitter enemy (before Christ, the captain of our salvation, obtained the victory), and enlist under *his* banner who is the friend of souls: Let us beware to fall again into the snare of the evil one, lest our *last* state be worse than the first. Happy is he, saith our Lord, *who endureth to the end. Be faithful, saith God, unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Let us pray earnestly then for *grace* that we may persevere, and not waver in the faith, lest we be found not meet for the kingdom of God, but that we may be strong, stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our faith is not in vain in *HIM*: And to this end let us firmly believe in Christ; let us think of him, not only now, and at *particular seasons*, which publicly reveal the different stages of his *trial*, but let us place his *birth, life, and death*, for ever before us, that we may be always strengthened to serve him *here*, and thereby prepared to live with him *for ever* in his heavenly kingdom,

kingdom, which was the grand and merciful design of his being born in this world. To him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the one holy, mighty, and gracious God, who willeth and worketh our salvation, be all honor, praise, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

the nation of his spirit, by every leaf of scripture
in our power. Let us truly love, fear, obey, and
serve him, that is both our way and our way. Let
us comfort and adore him with our hearts, believe on
him in our hearts, and honour him by our lives.
Christ is our light, let us not marly our ourselves
from keeping it: he is the way, let us gladly
embrace it: he is the way to life, let us follow
that blessed path: We are Christ's soldiers and
servants, let us prove it by making war continu-
ally with sin, with the world, which are the devil,
the world, and the flesh: let us labor to shake
off that yoke which enlaved us to our bitter
enemy (beside Christ, the captain of our salvation,
obtained the victory) and call under his banner
who is the friend of souls: Let us beware to fall
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this God let us truly believe in Christ: let us
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sons, which he doth reveal the different stages of
his will, but let us place his faith, hope, and charity
for ever before us, that we may be always
presenting to him our hearts and thereby pre-
sented to him with him for ever in his heavenly
kingdom.

DISCOURSE XI.

*A Homily for Good-Friday.—Of the Death and Passion
of our Savior Jesus Christ.*

PHILIPPIANS ii. 8.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

TO every real christian—to every returning penitent, the event of which this day reminds us, must afford an awful subject of most devout and humble consideration; for surely it would reflect the foulest disgrace upon the very name of christian to let this season pass, without a solemn record of the gracious work of our redemption, wrought, as about this time, through the tender love and mercy of our Savior Jesus Christ, who, while we were sinners (and his bitter enemies of course), was so astonishingly gracious, as to lay down his life for our sakes, and through his atonement made for our offence, to deliver us from the power of the devil, sin and death; nay even from the sentence of eternal condemnation, to which we were liable by

our fallen nature, without his help to save us. Surely, if the celebrated exploits of our fellow-creatures are worthy of *remembrance*; if we judge it right to express some acts of praise and gratitude for the advantages ourselves, or the community, may have received from the generous exertions of *mortal men*; how much more doth it behove us to keep in mind, and magnify the wonderful and blessed consequence of Christ's death and sufferings, whereby he hath reconciled us to our heavenly Father; so that, as before we were justly *children of wrath*, we are now become, through the merits of Christ, the children of *grace*, or returning favor; we are entitled to call him *Abba, Father*; are considered as his converted children; and made real inheritors with Christ, his only Son, of the kingdom of heaven.

Now when we duly weigh the character of the *person* who hath done this for us, Christ's gracious love towards his creatures, receives an *additional* degree of value, and consequently an increase of praise; for, *He who thought it not robbery to be equal with his Father* in heaven, and was possessed of every glory, power, and enjoyment of his divine nature, yet condescended to divest himself, for a season, of *all* these exalted honors, to descend into this vale of misery and impurity, to become *mortal man*, and even to humble himself to the degrading office of a *servant*, that he might minister for our good, and provide for the eternal happiness of ungrateful rebels, who had forsaken God's most holy laws, and were entirely devoted to the sinful pleasures of a degenerated and evil nature. Yet, even in this state of almost desperate enmity, Christ placed himself between the merited wrath of God against our foul offences, cancelled the severity of the obligation, which subjected us to the divine displeasure, and satisfied that infinite justice, which could no otherwise have been atoned, and (as the

apostle

apostle St. Paul expresses it, Coloss. ii. 14.) *blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*

As frail creatures, who had fallen from original innocence, and forfeited the protection of our heavenly Father, the debt became *too great for us to pay*; and without payment, or perfect obedience, the Almighty, whose attributes are all equally *infinite*, (and consequently cannot behold impurity, or imperfection) could not possibly be reconciled to such creatures as were in a state of *increasing* degeneracy and sin. It is evident likewise, from the above condition of man, that he had not power of *himself* to pay the debt. When therefore we take these things into serious consideration, first, the great love of our dear Redeemer, that *mystery of God and Christ*, (Coloss. ii. 2.) secondly, the grievous *nature* and heavy debt of sin; and that God, even when we were dead in our sins, *both quickened us together with him, forgiving us all our trespasses*, (Col. ii. 13.) thirdly, That the debt was of such necessity to be *entirely* discharged, in order to the possibility of our *acceptance*, that it could not otherwise be done, but by the sufferings and sacrifice of the *innocent*, (the *just to die for the unjust*;) who, I say, when he meditates thoroughly on these wonderful events, can fail to hate sin in his heart, and to be alarmed at its most *sure*, and dreadful *effects*, as opposing the purity and holiness of God. Well may we be afraid of its deadly poison, when we see its taint in our nature was so strong, and God's hatred of it so great, that he could not be satisfied by any thing men and angels could effect, but that only the death of his only and well-beloved Son could purchase our redemption. And when we reflect further, that it was for *our* sins, together with those of the whole world, that

this most innocent and spotless Lamb of God, devoted himself to fulfil his Father's will towards us sinful creatures, we shall find abundantly more reason to reproach ourselves, every time we crucify the Lord afresh, by our wilful stubbornness and impenitent hearts, than to accuse the temporary malice of the Jews, whose cruelty persecuted him *to the death*. *All mankind* bore a part in the cause of his sufferings: *They* were principally the instruments of inflicting the *penalty* he was to endure, for the joint wickedness of human nature, which could no otherwise have been forgiven. Deeply, therefore, doth it concern us, to search and condemn our own hearts; to humble ourselves, and confess and lament our great wretchedness, without the blessing of a Redeemer. Let us dwell a little on this alarming truth. If in the great wisdom, and infinite mercy of God, he saw fit not to spare the *Son of his love*, but to allow him to submit and be smitten for sins of which his holy soul could never have been guilty; if there was a *necessity* in this, in order to magnify the divine mercy towards his helpless creatures, O how much more ought we to be truly sorry for our daily and manifold sins against so good a Being! How ought it to urge us to *repentance*, to sincere contrition, and an endeavour after reformation. It requires no depth of understanding, no extraordinary knowledge, to determine that if a man loves sin, that is, *continues* therein, it is impossible to be in God's favor. No one can dare to say he loveth his Savior *truly*, and cherish vice (the author of his death) at the same time. The proof of our regard for Christ is the abstaining from all sin. Attend to his own unerring words; *Who so keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me*. Let us, above all things, beware of running into temptation, for in proportion as we yield to God's enemy, who is likewise our most deadly foe, we become traitors

traitors to the Lord, who bought us. By continuing in our sins we shall, in a worse sense, become the crucifiers of our Lord, than they who actually nailed him to the cross. And to prevent us from such wicked guilt, let us weigh the danger all such are in, according to the Apostle's exhortation in Hebrews vi. 6. that as *they crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame, so shall it be more difficult, after such a falling off, to renew them again unto repentance.* We should consider also, what St. Paul admonisheth in another place, Rom. vi. 23. that *if the wages of sin is death, even death eternal, it seriously concerneth us to beware of risking such a danger.* Neither because Christ, through the all-sufficient merits of his death, hath obtained a possibility of our being saved from the curse of the law, are we therefore presumptuously to *continue in sin, that grace may abound.* Against this deadly error the apostle warns his disciples, in the second verse of the same chapter, *for if we live after the flesh, (that is, follow the sinful lusts thereof) the Almighty threateneth, by the mouth of the same apostle, that we shall die; but if we through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live,* Rom. viii. 13. *For if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you,* ver. 11. Here therefore we have a proof whether *we be in Christ, or Christ in us,* because then, sin will be dead in us, that is, we shall not *serve sin*; but if sin rule, or reign in us, then is God, the fountain of all grace and virtue, departed from us. In that case, the evil spirit taketh possession of us, and most assuredly all who die under his dominion, will find themselves in a most miserable state. They will never rise to life, but only to endless condemnation, since they are not of those *who are in Christ Jesus,* who all profess this never-failing sign, that *they walk not after the flesh,*

but after the spirit*, Rom. viii. 1. Now our great wisdom and interest is to cleave fast to *this* wholesome doctrine, viz., that Christ hath not redeemed us from sin, (that is the wages of it) that we may with *security* return to it again; but he hath so redeemed us, that he may present us a *renewed, purified* people, regenerated by his Holy Spirit. His redemption *qualifies* us to receive grace, to reject the *motions* of sin, and to live to *holiness*, in that we are reconciled to the Father, and can serve him in peace, without fear of having an unsatisfied debt to rise up against us; and in this sense do we receive the sign of *baptism*, by which we are washed from the *original*, inherent impurity of sin, in which we were born (though not *prevented* from receiving the infection†) and which represents to us also, that hereafter we should *walk in newness or righteousness of life*. Accordingly, we do then openly promise to renounce the devil, and all his temptations; to love God and keep his commandments, as holy

* It is not uncommon with some persons, from an erroneous zeal in magnifying the Redeemer's merits, to quote the former part of this verse, without continuing the sense of it; but this is manifestly *separating* what God hath inspired his Apostle to *join together*; for the only *valuable* assurance that any disciple can have, that he hath an *interest* in, or is *benefited* by, his Master's merits, is that he walketh according to the *spirit of Christ*, in a good degree of purity and holiness.

† This may be illustrated by the case of a *worldly* debtor, who, if, happily liberated from his oppressive burden, *lives in peace*, and strives, in his calling, to discharge his future duty. But while he is conscious of a *heavy demand* against him, which is in a manner *impossible* for him to pay, he becomes discouraged even from the *attempt*. Thus, through the inestimable dispensation of God's *free grace*, the hand writing of original sin is *blotted out*, by the *blood of Christ*, to all enlisted under the christian covenant. But as the freedom from an *old debt* does not *prevent*, and much less *authorize*, a person to involve himself *again*, so if we do not profit by this act of grace; if we do not deport ourselves like the *redeemed of the Lord*, we are plainly unworthy of the *deliverance*, and the *means of recovery*, and if we contract *fresh* guilt, by resisting the appointed assistance, the consequence is inevitable suffering, there being *no more sacrifice for sin*.

children

children of the merciful Father who hath begotten us again through his Son. If therefore we esteeme him as a *Father indeed*, let us shew him the honor that is due to him. If we own ourselves as his children, let us demonstrate our obedience, even as Christ hath set us an example; who, as St. Paul doth testify in the text, *humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*; and this he did for all who call upon him, and faithfully believe in him. It could be only for us, the sons of men, he died, because in him was nothing worthy punishment, nor was guile found in his mouth. Indeed the prophet Isaiah expressly describes the reason and effect of his heavy sufferings, in these words of the lild chap. 5th ver. *But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.* Surely, saith the Prophet, a little before, *He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.* He refused no torment, so we might be delivered from eternal pain; and this out of the fulness of divine love, for we neither did, or could, deserve such favour; in proportion therefore to our benefit, and from what we have received, we may securely build our further hope, and should discover gratitude; since, if God, out of his free grace and bounty, hath not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not surely with him also freely give us all things? We have hereby a comfortable assurance, that whatever we want, either for body or soul, that is really profitable for us, we may lawfully ask of God, and boldly approach him in his Son's name, For as many as receive Christ, to them giveth He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. So well pleased is the Almighty with the obedience of his beloved Son, that for his sake, he accepteth us, and will deny us nothing that is conducive to our soul's health. The sacrifice of Christ is as a

sweet smelling favor in the sight of God, and he accepts it as a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world.

Now surely, all that are christians *indeed*, and not in *name* only, must acknowledge themselves as much at a loss how properly to extol such gracious redemption, as they are *unworthy* to receive it; for to be fully discharged from the just punishment due to sin, and wholly restored to God's grace and favor, through the merits of Jesus Christ, are blessings of such extensive value, that they may well excite the astonishment and praise, even of *angels*; it being through Christ's death, that we receive continual pardon, on our sorrow for these daily trespasses, which otherwise must for ever exclude us from the presence of the Father. Here then is the *ground* of our justification before God. Through this we are accepted. It is this affords us a security for everlasting life: *Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, (Acts iv. 12.)* And if, as the apostle declares, this act of Christ is what *alone* can save, consequently, nothing man of *himself* can do, is worthy to take *part* with the Redeemer's merits, as a saving *cause*. For if it is through him we have the very power of doing good, we cannot truly place our deliverance to any virtue of our *own*. And as, doubtless, all our thoughts and works (however promising in the eye of imperfect judgment) could never have been pleasing to an all-pure God, but for the sake of the Redeemer's satisfaction, by which they are qualified; we cannot suppose that actions, stained and loaded with *infirmity*, and *imperfection*, could possibly move an holy Being to shew them favor. How then shall they presume to expect any share of glory without the infinite merits of Christ's life and death? For what are our very best exertions, compared to the spotless innocence, and
perfect

perfect righteousness of Christ; the sinless purity of which supplied the necessary ransom we required? Let us therefore join the Psalmist (cxv. 1.) and exclaim, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake.* Let us exult and glorify God's name for ever. Let us praise him with all our might, for he hath dealt with us according to his great mercy, and not according to our deserts. He himself hath wrought out our salvation. He did not forbear to spare himself. He was not content to commit the work to his most blessed angels; but that the redemption might be full and perfect, he condescended to undertake the work in person; nor did all the grievous torments of his sharp and tedious sufferings, abate his gracious purpose of procuring even eternal blessings for his very enemies. Nay he permitted his heart to be pierced for our recovery, and gave himself up to every degree of pain, shame, and sorrow, that we might be regenerated, and become the sons of God. Can we be backward then, with such a scene of love before us, to give him *all our hearts*? to make it the constant study of our lives, to shew our gratitude to such a Savior, or shall we ever be unmindful of such invaluable benefits? Shall any who profess to be named after him; who delight to be called his *followers*; who believe that only through him they can have life; shall any with the smallest claim to christian character, refuse to do what he has ordered, what he has appointed for their good?—It would be hard to say, which is greater, the madness, the folly, or the baseness of such reproach. Can any be said to love their Savior, or wish him to shew them favor, who wilfully despise his *last commands*, the very means of grace? Nay, instead of rejecting his mercies, it behoves us to *take up our cross and follow him*; for his death and passion doth not only hold forth a ransom, and satisfaction for our sins, but it

was

was intended likewise to supply a most perfect pattern of *patience*, and submission to the will of God. For if it was necessary that Christ, through *suffering* should attain to glory, and by such gracious trial enter into the joy of his Father; much more doth it become us to be *patient* under our lighter crosses, and every trouble of the present life. And as surely as Christ suffered for us, as saith St. Peter, 1 Ep. ii. 21. leaving us an example that we should follow his steps; so if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him. Not that the sufferings of the present time are worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; (as St. Paul affirms, Rom. viii. 18.) but we should endure every trial gladly, and even rejoice to be like Christ in this life, that so by *patient* continuance in well doing, our light may shine before men; and by the exercise of our christian labours, we may glorify our Father who is in heaven. And though it may be grievous to flesh and blood, to bear the cross of Christ in the trial of the sorrows and vexations of this life, yet in the end it yieldeth the joyful fruit of HOPE; because by patience our faith is tried; as St. James observes, i. 3. and by keeping our eye intent upon the reward, the pain of our labour will diminish. Instead, therefore, of repining, let us rather strive (after our Savior's valuable example) to endure calmly what is visited on us; For there is no glory, (saith St. Peter, 1 Ep. ii. 20.) if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently; but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For so did Christ suffer for our sakes, and even hereunto are we called; to be evil spoken of for the sake of Christ. And this is thank-worthy if a man for conscience sake towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. And the same Apostle giveth us another example of Christ's patience, in the 23d verse. That when he was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. In truth

it is the character of christian patience, to forbear revenge, and secretly to rejoice in suffering, whether from friend, or foe, and in all things to study to suffer innocently and without reproach; for we are told by the God of love himself, in the vth of St. Matthew, that he in whom perfect charity or love resideth, rather studieth to return good for evil, to bless them who curse him, to do good to them that hate him, and to pray for them that persecute him, and use him ill. This is the utmost test of evangelical meekness, and is set forth in an eminent degree, in the example of Christ himself, who affords us the most perfect pattern of this virtue of forbearance, that ever could exist. For when hanging on the cross, in torments unutterable; in the midst of his unfeeling enemies, and subject to their most cruel mockeries, and provoking insults, yet did he discover such compassion towards these very murderers, who had not one grain of pity for his sufferings, that his heart overflowing with love, instead of harbouring hatred, he prays most graciously to his Father for them, saying, O Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Excess of love! which man alone could never have fulfilled. Proof in itself, that the divine nature was at work, to perfect peace, and furnish an example of the sublimest christian purity.

Another instance of unexampled meekness, our Blessed Master hath left us, in his mild deportment, even towards the most ungrateful, cruel traitor that ever fallen nature produced. For when the wretched Judas came to betray him to his mortal enemies, even unto death, he said no more than Friend! wherefore art thou come? By these divine examples of perfect charity, which our Lord hath left us, we should strive to excite the blessed effects they are calculated to produce in us, by learning of him to be meek and lowly of heart. If we are true servants of Jesus Christ; if his grace hath wrought

wrought any good work in our hearts; such charity shall we bear to one another, even good will to our inveterate enemies. *For if ye only shew love to them who love you, what reward can ye expect, (saith Christ) do not the heathen the same?* If we have attained any portion of this true christian virtue, we shall give better proof of it, than what barely publicans and heathens can perform. We must, in a degree, become perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect, who maketh his sun to shine on the good and the bad, and sendeth his rain on the just, and the unjust. After his gracious example then, we must deal out universal benevolence like obedient children of our heavenly Father. For if Christ was obedient, even unto the death of the cross, how much more doth it concern us to be obedient in these smaller, and far easier points of universal charity, and submissive patience.

Let us then examine our hearts, and strive thoroughly to forgive our neighbours their light offences, as God for Christ's sake hath promised to forgive us our manifold and heavy provocations, if we follow his precepts. Can we with any modesty or confidence implore remission of our innumerable transgressions against a holy God, and yet deny forgiveness to a weak and fallen creature like ourselves, for matters of the most trifling import? In vain shall we call for mercy at the last, if we refuse that mercy others ask of us; for this is one positive condition of God's favor towards ourselves. You cannot be ignorant of his own words upon the subject. *For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you.* O, how should this sore and awful declaration incline us to a peaceful, condescending, humble, and forgiving temper! The most effectual sign that we belong to Christ is, that we have acquired this portion of his blessed Spirit. It ill becometh christians to think hardly of one another. Are we not all vile
I sinners?

sinners? Hath not Christ died for all who *repent* and *turn* to him? Will he not visit the most proud and corrupted heart, that *acknowledgeth* his iniquity, and *forsoaketh* his sins? And if we differ from others, of whom have we received the gift, but of him who sanctifieth the ungodly, that is, satisfieth for his former crimes, and by his grace enableth him to lead a godly life in future. Let us then be kindly affectioned towards one another in all things; praying for one another, that we may all equally be healed from the infirmities of our fallen nature. Let us be, as much as possible, of one mind and one spirit, agreeing together in brotherly love and concord. Then shall we shew ourselves true children of our merciful Father. Then shall we engage God to be gracious to our sins. In short, by cultivating this spirit we shall become most fit to approach our Lord at his holy table, and receive the blessed sacrament of his body and blood, in christian fellowship with each other, to the everlasting comfort of our immortal Souls. It is with disciples of *this* description our Blessed Master delighteth to come and dwell; and his favorite disciple himself declares thus much, (1 Ep. iv. 16.) *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him; and by this, saith he again, (1 Ep. ii. 3.) we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. And by this we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren; for he that loveth not his brother abideth in death: (1 Ep. iii. 14.) because he who hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know, (saith the same Apostle) that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Such persons must of necessity be *hated* of God, and all holy angels; because peace and love compose the character of God's *perfected* servants in heaven; and *hatred* and *envy* are qualities that belong only to the devil and his angels.

God

God grant us all his grace to improve these christian qualities to the utmost; that we may experience this pledge of our salvation, even *here*, before we are called to give account of the opportunities afforded us to prepare ourselves for endless happiness. For if we *thus* experience that we have obtained his grace, we may rest assured we shall receive the mercy of God the Father, through *his intercession*. This is the *true* and *only* assurance we are taught from scripture to expect. For in whatever degree Christ's grace, (that is, the work of his good Spirit) hath taught us to *overcome the world*, and changed our *hearts* by the Spirit of his love, so far we may build up hope of being *accepted*, and that we are *renewed in our nature*. Examine yourselves by this rule, and be not deceived by false pretensions and appearances. If you find your hearts are backward in forgiving those who have offended *you*, confess the hardness of your unrelenting nature, and pray *continually* to God, to *soften* and *convert* your hearts. But if while you acknowledge the want of this pure spirit of love, you do not feel a wish to testify a *better disposition*, you are most certainly in a *very dangerous* way, and have nothing left, but earnest prayer to God, that he would change your *heart of stone*, to *one of flesh*. That he would give you a *new heart* and a right spirit. For not all the *intercession* and *merits* of ANOTHER will ought avail with God towards us, if the power of the Redeemer be not already shewn by the *proof in ourselves*, that we partake of that indispensable spirit of peace and love, which is to *qualify us for his final acceptance*.

Not all our best exertions will ever prevail with God to pardon our trespasses, as long as we harbor unforgiveness towards our neighbor. For what doth God say? *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. It was *mercy* alone that engaged the compassionate
Jesus

Jesus to suffer for *us* his *enemies*. Nor will it ultimately profit us, how much soever we may *remember* the glorious fruits, and precious purchase of his death and sufferings; how much soever we may exalt them, take pleasure in them, or *trust* in them, unless we keep in mind, likewise, to FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLPE, and thus prove that we are *his true disciples*. If we consider the life and death of Christ in *this light*, that both were appointed, in order that we might obtain the regenerating spirit of love shed abroad in our hearts; if we profess and maintain a *lively faith*, that for the *merit* of his abundant sufferings, this grace and help shall be bestowed on us; and then proceed to govern our *thoughts* and *actions* by that universal *charity* or *love* towards mankind, which Christ displayed in all his life, and at his death; *then* may we be said *truly to remember the death of Christ*; and being thus (as far as frail mortality will admit) *sincere followers* of his example, we shall obtain good hope of living with him in that heavenly kingdom, where he sitteth at the right hand of God, to make intercession for all who thus wish to be partakers of his grace *now*, that they may be *capable* of partaking of his *glory* at his *second coming*. To HIM, the ever-blessed Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, and to the Father, and the Holy Spirit, three persons and one God, be all honor and glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

DISCOURSE XII.

The Second Homily for Good Friday.

HEBREWS ix. latter part of 26th VERSE.

But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

AS this is the anniversary of a day which exacts the praise and wonder of both *men and angels*, in consequence of that astonishing humility and love discovered in behalf of a fallen sinful race of creatures by Jesus Christ; how can you employ the time better at this particular season, than to make this wonderful event the principal subject of your most serious reflections? In order then that you may the better understand and become more sensible of the prodigious mercy of our Savior Christ in suffering even to the death, for all mankind, it concerns us to examine closely into our own great *unworthiness*, by which inquiry, and confession, we shall be led to consider duly the first and urgent *cause* which inclined him to display such marvellous condescension towards the sons of men.

The history of our redemption can at no time require to be more fully related and explained, than on the day our deliverance was *completed*. For the instruction therefore of all who may be ignorant in this most essential knowledge, it may be proper to premise that this discourse is intended to contain a full and clear account of this very interesting subject; and in proportion as you regard the welfare of your souls, you will lend due attention to the alarming reasons that induced God's gracious care of them.

When our first parent Adam had broken his Maker's commandment, in eating of the *forbidden* fruit (which was the trial of his *obedience*), to which he was strongly tempted by the example and persuasion of the companion God had given him, he by that act of disobedience attracted a fallen, or *altered* nature, not only to *himself* but to all his *posterity*; to all that should proceed from him in the way of natural generation, and which must necessarily partake of the *nature* whence they were *derived*. For as, had our first parents continued innocent, their offspring would of course have shared that unpolliuted disposition they at first enjoyed, so when they were *changed* in their nature, in consequence of the transgression which destroyed their holiness and purity, they could only produce *such* a race, as they were then become *themselves*. This must be very clear and natural to any person's apprehension. But this obvious *cause* of human degeneracy produced *another* effect, no less unavoidable and unhappy, and that was, the *just displeasure* of an offended God, and merited punishment: for the Almighty, according to his first sentence, pronounced at the time of giving the commandment to his creatures, condemned both Adam and all his progeny to the inevitable penalty of everlasting death, that is, eternal punishment of both soul and body; because it was impossible for

creatures

creatures in a state of wilful, *unreasoned* rebellion, or for any thing impure, to partake of God's peace and favor; who is too pure to behold iniquity, or to receive his creatures in any inferior state to what his wisdom and goodness originally made them, or to which they may arrive by regeneration; and this the very nature of God renders equally self-evident.

The law, or trial of man's faith, was easy, clear, full of mercy, and liberality, and worthy of him who gave it. For God said unto Adam, *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;* or as the hebrew text more correctly expresses it—*Dying, thou shalt die*; that is, by falling from thy first state of purity and innocence, thou shalt incur the certain penalty due to every thing imperfect and impure; thou shalt be liable to death, and punishment. The expression does not imply, that man was immediately to fall into his original state of nothingness; his body to dust, and the spirit to the Lord who gave it, that is, that he was presently to die the mortal death: but the tempter took advantage of the letter of the expression, and craftily converted it to man's destruction, by his treacherous mode of proving to him that he might eat (might sin) and yet preserve his mortal being; (for Adam was deceived in that he saw the serpent continued to live after he had eaten of the fruit,) or in other words, he pretended to prove God a liar. Now the import of the threatening was not instant natural death, (as before observed) but that in the moment man became disobedient, he should forfeit God's favor and protection; and consequently must be miserable; and in time, be subject to the fate of every creature deserted by its Maker and Preserver. And as the Lord had spoken, so it came to pass. Adam, notwithstanding he was forbidden, presumed to eat

of the tree : and by so doing he died, he became mortal, was exposed to the effect of the sentence, and was cast out of Paradise (a blessed region originally prepared for him) into a world which underwent a curse on his account. He was no longer a candidate for heaven, but having believed the devil in preference to God, was certainly from that time under the power of the former, and a slave to his further evil suggestions. To this state of man doth our blessed Lord testify in the gospel, in calling us lost sheep that have gone astray, and wandered from the chief shepherd of our souls. To this state of Adam also doth St. Paul allude, when he says, in the vii Rom. 14th ver. *That death reigned from Adam to Moses*; and in the 17th and 18th, *that by one man's offence death reigned by one*; for by the offence of one, judgment came upon all to condemnation. So that, upon his fall, neither himself nor any that descended from him—even though they had not sinned after, the very similitude of his transgression, could have any claim or interest at all to the kingdom of heaven, because they were become corrupt in their general nature, and incapable of it. They were reprobates, or outcasts, from God, Adam their representative having forfeited their inheritance through transgression. But he was still the type or figure of HIM who was to come, Rom. v. 14. in whom all men should have life by the change or renovation of that nature, which Adam had defiled (for the sake of indulging his own will), and on account of what Christ, the second Adam, should do for them in it.

Now, if under this state of depravity and misery, mankind could have recovered again, and obtained forgiveness of God, the case would not have been so very deplorable; because he might then have endeavoured some means of preserving himself from eternal death, though he had experienced the curse of the law as to his temporal dissolution; but it is self-evident, that he had no such power, or there could

could have been no need of a *Mediator*, or of a *regenerated* spirit being given him. He could not in the nature of things, after he had made himself *sinful*, perform any act to render himself *more perfect* than he was as *first* created. It was utterly impossible, that in a state of *degeneracy*, he could do *more* than in a state of *innocency*. He forsook the staff of his support in his *first* state, by preferring his *own will*, and thus sin having entered his nature, his will became still more turned *from* God, instead of *to* him; and as consequently *there was none that did good, no not one*; how then could he possibly work out his own salvation? Could God's offended authority be satisfied by *offering all burnt sacrifices*, as was appointed in the old law, by *the blood of bulls and calves, and goats and lambs*? Common sense should teach us that these things had no virtue to repair the mischief *sin* had wrought in human nature. They could not appease God's just displeasure, or reconcile him to man again. No; the law was only the *shadow* of good things to come. These things represented the future sacrifice of Christ, and only shewed that there was no redemption *without blood*. In the xth chap. of the Hebrews, you will find this matter fully explained, and learn that the bloody sacrifices of the old law were imperfect, and no ways able to deliver those that offered them from the condemnation due to sin, and the condition an impure nature must be subject to, without *infinite justification*: so that if men trusted to these things, they would lean on a broken staff, which in the end would deceive them. What then could Adam and his posterity do besides? Could he fulfil the whole law divided into two tables, and thereby retrieve his offence? Indeed had they been able to fulfil the law of righteousness, in first loving God *above all things*, and then loving their neighbor as themselves; thus might they have appeased the Lord's anger, and escaped the terrible sentence of

endless misery against all who fall short of the perfection God expecteth in those he loves; for it is written, *do this and thou shalt live*; that is, fulfil my commandments, keep thyself upright and perfect in them according to my will, then thou shalt live, and not die: Here certainly eternal life is promised upon this condition; but how was this to be done by the original transgressor, or any one inheriting his *corrupted nature*? for such was the infirmity of mankind *after he fell*: so prevalent were weakness and insufficiency, that man of himself could not walk uprightly in God's commandments, though he might have wished it ever so earnestly; in truth, he needed the very power he had forfeited, even to encourage the *inclination*; he daily and hourly fell from his common duty, offending the Lord his God by innumerable ways, as his depraved disposition supplied temptation, and consequently to the increase of his condemnation. It was a sense of this pervading degeneracy that made the prophet David exclaim, in these words of the xivth Psalm: *they are corrupt and become abominable in their doings, there is none that doeth good, no not one.* Now in this case what profit could Adam have had by the law? None at all: for as St. James observes, chap. ii. 10. *Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* This is rendered indisputable by the effect of Adam's first transgression, which was a single act of disobedience, that brought in every other evil of our present nature; and further, to shew the necessity of our uniform observance of the moral law; we read in Deut. xxvii. 26. *Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of the law to do them.*

We come now to the useful application of all that has hitherto been said: We cannot suppose that it is to lower the value of the law, or shew that it is not good; God forbid; the law rendereth us guilty, not because of any deficiency in itself, for it is holy, just, and good, but because we have no longer any power of ourselves to help ourselves, and

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to fulfil it so perfectly as a God of infinite purity and justice necessarily requires; and therefore it is added, as the apostle justly says, as a *school-master to lead us unto CHRIST*, who hath purchased such a power for us, as will again enable us to keep it so far as to prove ourselves under the guidance of his grace: It was added also, to convince man of the necessity of its being perfectly fulfilled by HIM, who mediated in the stead of Adam, and us his posterity, who having literally *nothing to pay*, must otherwise have submitted to the penalty of the debt; and the more Adam and his posterity experienced the effects of their impaired nature, the more clearly they must be sensible of their want of power to please God, and the consequent misery in having wilfully disobeyed him; for what was the original sin of Adam, but preferring his *own will* to the *will of God*? founded in, and flowing from the very same principle as that of the devil, who tempted him, viz. *pride, disobedience, and rebellion*. They both of them fell from one and the same cause, because they would not *acknowledge their dependance* on HIM who *made and upholdeth* all things. The one indeed fell from a state of more exalted rank and favor, (and therefore the sin the fouler) the other under a course of trial for a more superior condition promised to his *obedience*. And hence the infinite riches of God's mercy are magnified: hence the astonishing power, and unspeakable goodness of divine wisdom appear in fuller lustre, in that when all hope of further help was lost through man's own exertion; when he *was dead in trespasses and sin*, and wholly unable to satisfy the justice of his Judge, *then*, even under such a desperate state of despair and woe, did *Christ die for the ungodly*: then did he by the appointment of the Father, descend willingly from Heaven, to be wounded for our sakes; to be numbered with the transgressors; to be condemned unto death; to

take upon him the punishment of our sins, and to sacrifice his body on the cross, as an all-sufficient atonement and remission of what lost mankind could never have repaired *; and thus have we a clear sense of these following texts:—*Isaiah liii. 4, 5. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows*; that is, he hath renewed our cause of joy, by satisfying for our sins, and disobedience, and reinstating us in God's favor; *for the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed*; that is, for the sake of his sufferings and merits, we have been accepted, and a possibility of working out our own salvation hath been obtained for us. St. Paul speaketh to the same effect in 2 Cor. v. 21. *For God hath made him to be sin for us (that is, an offering, or sacrifice for sin) who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*;

* Not that Christ immediately fulfilled all outward righteousness in his own person upon earth, as soon as the creature fell from his original uprightness; for, in the mysterious counsel and wisdom of the Almighty, the fulness of time was not yet come for him to be openly offered up; but in the above description of his office, we consider him as the lamb slain from the beginning of the world; and in the instant man fell, he became his immediate redeemer, by checking the progress of the fall, through the promise of deliverance; and thus the foreknowledge, wisdom, power, and love of God are exalted, in that he did not create a hapless creature without providing for his salvation, against all the craft and malice of his enemy: in short, the capacity or power that man lost by his own disobedience was restored to him by the pledged obedience of Christ. And as when God said, *let there be light, and there was light*, so the instant he spoke peace to man, in the promise of a Savior, a seed of divine life was renewed in his soul, he was received again into favor, upon the conditions of faith and repentance; and thus Christ is truly said to be *the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world*: the body was dead, that is, exposed to infirmities, and death at last, because of sin, but the spirit became life, because of righteousness; that is, on account of the power newly communicated to it through the grace of Christ, which enabled it to strive after holiness; which opened the eye of the mind again to see the goodness and power of its deliverer; to lament the blindness contracted by disobedience; and to strive to recover a place in God's favor, by the use of the gracious means proposed for that end.

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in other words, that whatever good we do, should all be placed to *his account* as the cause, through the power of his spirit renewing our nature; or in short, that salvation is not of man, but God. St. Peter likewise holdeth forth the same doctrine, 1. Epistle of Peter. iii. 18. viz. *that Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*, so that the reconciliation being made, we have only to trust to him for strength to perform the condition of the promise, namely, to walk in newness of life; and to that end, to employ the appointed outward means to remind us of our wants, and to exercise us in such deportment, as will prepare us for those gifts of grace, we all so much require.

Many more passages might be produced to assist in building up our faith in the virtue of Christ's atonement, but these will suffice at this time. From the whole then that hath been now offered for your information on this important subject, we are especially called upon to let the cause of Christ's death so operate upon our souls, as to prevail upon us to glorify him by our lives: since, in one word, that cause was man's original sin of disobedience. Accordingly we may observe, that when the angel appeared to Joseph, to remove the doubts and fears he entertained concerning Mary his wife, he gave the clear reason why the child's name should be called Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins: and when John the Baptist preached Christ, and openly shewed him to the people, he plainly describes him as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. Again, when the woman of Canaan besought Christ to help her daughter, who was possessed by an evil spirit, he confessed openly, that he was sent to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and in John x. 11. That as the good shepherd he giveth his life for the sheep. Sin, therefore, it is clear, was the only cause of Christ's

Christ's death, and the dreadful sufferings he bravely endured, which should affect us with deep sorrow for our sins, with a true sense of the hateful nature of them in requiring such a satisfaction, and with remorse and reproach at the share we have in the debt of the law, since Christ died for the sins of the whole world, and that all might come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. Had man continued upright, had he kept the commandment, had he not dared to doubt and break the will of God, then Christ (who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God) would not have been reduced to take upon him the form of a servant, and suffer in man's stead. Being immortal in heaven, he needed not to have condescended to become mortal upon earth; being the true bread of the soul, he needed not to have hungered; and being the fountain of living waters, he needed not to have thirsted; being life itself, he needed not to have suffered death in the body. If our first parents had kept the first law given them, Christ would have continued by his spirit to have guided his creatures in true holiness; but sin exposed this gracious Savior to all his sufferings; and heavy must the burden of it be, when God's justice could not be satisfied by any other sacrifice than the son of his love. When we think of this, it is surely enough to make the stoutest tremble, nor is it possible to hear this truth without having the heart and conscience smitten with se-

* He did not come to save every individual, actual sinner from the unavoidable, and just punishment due to a wilful course of continued, and unrepented transgressions, but to remove the impediment to holiness, which the whole world, all human nature, labored under, in consequence of original depravity; and to restore the possibility for all to escape the wrath of God against sin, by following such a degree of light as he had obtained to help their infirmities; and to shew them their danger of not conforming to the inward law of a regenerated mind.

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vere reproach at our continued ingratitude and rash perverseness. Yet alas! too true it is; the stubborn sinner can hear all this *unmoved*, because he is not sensible of his danger, and the mercy proffered him: but the Almighty caused that even the *inanimate* works of nature should disgrace *such obduracy as this*, for while Christ hung upon the cross, and was yielding up the ghost, the scripture tells us, the vail or curtain of the temple was violently torn to pieces: that the whole earth shook, as if convulsed by the pangs of him who made it; and the hard and ponderous rocks were cleft asunder;—even graves were opened, and dead bodies arose. Such wonderful prodigies did God appoint to witness the horror of this scene; to record the consummation of that awful mystery; that GOD IN THE FLESH WAS RECONCILING HIMSELF TO SINFUL DUST AND ASHES. So, like the Jews of old, if we are not moved by these affecting scenes, we are harder hearted than the very *stones*, and shew less feeling than the bodies of the dead. To behold an earthly benefactor, a fellow-creature, exposed to *shame, pain, and grief*, most *undeservedly*, would stir up pity in a generous mind: but when, as sinful creatures, we place before us, the last barbarous treatment of the *great Saviour of the world!* the spotless Lamb of God, sweating, as it were, drops of blood, in consequence of the violent struggle with the penalty he graciously engaged to bear! when we think of his tender flesh being most unworthily torn with scourges! that the head of the humble, and adorable Jesus should be mocked, and wounded, by a crown of sharp, and lacerating thorns; his hands and feet transfixed by mangling nails, and his body stretched in a most tormenting posture, on the cross, and bearing on those parts most exquisite in *feeling*; and when we consider the torture of his flesh increasing the agonies of his *mind*, so as to force from him the following bitter exclamation; who
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can refrain abhorrence at a rebellious nature, or withhold *due love* from *such a Saviour*. *Why God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?* speaks more than volumes to the sinner's ear. And what he must have suffered, had not Christ atoned his guilt, the Psalmist's prophetic words do here most justly verify: *When thou hidest thy face I am troubled*. This most dreadful of all torments did Christ endure for us. To be forsaken of God, indeed, is the excess of misery. It is certain our Lord experienced something unutterably terrifying in his mortal nature, to have exacted such a *desponding cry*; but with this last shock to his *humanity* he closed our ransom. The most happy words assert, *IT IS FINISHED*; and his triumph was completed in this final confidence and submission: *Into thy hands I commend my spirit*.

What christian can duly reflect on this astonishing event, and not be smitten! O, that this picture of Christ's death might be ever printed on our hearts; let it increase our hatred for all sin; let it promote our love of God, and the blessed author of our salvation, and render us cautious of the smallest seeming offences, which, as acts of disobedience, will lead us on to greater. The act, as has been shewn you, that brought all sin into the world, and Christ from heaven, though slight in sound, was yet most *woful* in its consequence. Even no less than to shut man out from the favor of his Creator, and expose him to *eternal death*. So true is the saying of David (in the vth psalm) *For Thou art the God that hast no pleasure in wickedness, neither shall any evil dwell with thee*.

* Terrible beyond all possibility of word, or thought, must be the conflict that could make the Holy and eternal Son of God, doubt for *one moment* of his Father's love!

† In this sense also we may understand the expression of Christ, *dying for the whole world*, in that from the imperfection derived to human nature by the fall of man, the very *best* are *sinners*.

from him the following bitter exclamation; who

If you need any other token of God's hatred of sin, after this just now related, remember the destruction of the whole world, except eight persons; the dreadful overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; the three days' pestilence which the Almighty visited on his servant David's offence; the drowning of Pharaoh, and all his host, in the red sea; the judgment against the proud and unbelieving Nebuchadnezzar. The sacred Volume abounds with instances of God's fore vengeance against sin and sinners: but they all fall short of this last tremendous proof of its most deadly nature. God spared not his dear, and only Son; no other victim bearing a sufficient price to pay the enormous debt of sin. But mere lamentation will no ways avail to remove the taint that infects the whole creation. In this life is no perfection. There is no man liveth and sinneth not; and when we say Christ hath delivered us from sin, we do not mean that any man can be perfect in this body, or that he is free from such failings, as would render him pure in the sight of God, were it not for the merits of Christ's death; but only that he hath delivered us from the curse of it, that it shall not be placed against us, as it would have been, had he not paid the ransom, and satisfied that justice which the creature had offended beyond all power of remedy in himself. He took upon him the wages due to sin, which was death, and by death hath overcome that which had the power of death, even sin, that we, believing in him, might live for ever, and moreover experience such an earnest of his victory, obtained for us, as by the influence of his grace, and sanctifying spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body. This life must never be considered as a state of perfection, but of trial for a better, wherein, by the exercise of our faith, we might be prepared to serve God in his heavenly kingdom; and we must keep in mind that Christ fulfilled the whole law,

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as well as laid down his life to obtain satisfaction for original depravity, and by his spotless life, hath left us a pattern that we should follow his steps. And though it is impossible to be upright as he was, or for fallen creatures to become like angels, till Christ, by the power of his resurrection, shall clothe us with a new body; yet we must strive to become holy, and be as perfect as the grace of God will make us, or we never can be prepared to enter into the joy of our Lord.

Now by often recalling the cause and end, of the solemn event we commemorate this day, it will assist in bridling our unruly appetites, in lowering our rage for the vain pomps and pleasures of a fleeting life, and prevent our wilfully transgressing God's holy laws, whereby we, in a manner, crucify our Lord afresh. This will not only keep alive the fear of God in our hearts, but from the recollection of Christ's heavy sufferings, our love towards him must grow stronger, since God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John iii. 16.) And if our love is not moved by some such meditations as these following, nothing will affect us. First then, we should dwell frequently upon the dignity, and innocence, of the person who hath saved us. Secondly; on our unworthiness of any favor. Thirdly; on the justice of our punishment, and the consequent misery of our condition to all eternity, without redemption. And, fourthly; on the renewal of our minds by the power of God's grace. When we take all these together, well may we exclaim with the Apostle, O the depth of the riches, and mercy of God towards sinners! towards his enemies! No merit of ours could move him, for we were debtors to his infinite justice. It was pure, free, and unbounded love, that all nations and people might experience happiness, and magnify his goodness. Let us fall low then before

before his footstool, and say, with the holy Psalmist, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou so visitest him!* Surely we should exert mind, soul, strength, and every power to make some return of duty, for love like this! Let us try our conscience on the subject. Should we not think that they little deserved *our* love, who could not be persuaded in any measure to return it? How much more are we bound to love our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath bought favour, life, and freedom for our souls? Let us strive then, to give that proof of our love which he so plainly requires of us. That we honour his name and keep his commandments. Let us never forget, that salvation is the free gift of God. Nothing on our part, but our misery, nothing but his own pure *adams* could have moved him to it; and therefore, in this sense, Christ is most truly *our righteousness*, in that nothing could have justified us in the sight of God, but his *atonement*; since after Adam's fall, we never had been capable of recovery, had he not renewed the power in us of looking to the bishop, and shepherd of our souls. (to rot) *adams* no devil visitos

It only remains, that you should now be taught how to apply Christ's death and sufferings to your present comfort, in the healing of your souls, so that they may produce the desired effect, *eternal life*; for as it would profit a sick man *nothing*, to supply him with medicine, without he used it as *prescribed*, so Christ's death will avail us nothing, unless we receive it as God has appointed. Now our heavenly Father doth usually work by suitable means, in all his dealings with his rational creatures, and not by supernatural, or miraculous means; and in the benefit we expect from this his most extraordinary act of love, he also hath proposed a *certain* grace, or principle, whereby our souls may be assisted in obtaining all the blessings purposed by it, and which we cannot be too earnest in supplicating him

to granteus, and that is *altru*, not inconstant, showing faith, but a well-grounded *living* faith, a faith founded in a consciousness of our own insufficiency (as of ourselves alone) for any thing that is good, and that infinite mercy and power were absolutely necessary to compass the redemption of a sinful world; and this, as St. Paul teacheth, we must believe *with the heart unto righteousness*, that is, so effectually, as to procure the further power of bringing forth all manner of good works; this being an essential a proof of Christ's work upon our souls, as health is the effect of proper medicines for our bodies. And when this faith hath taken place, we shall readily make confession *with the mouth unto salvation*, what we have nothing of our own, but that Christ is all in all. St. Paul's reply to the trembling keeper of the prison, was, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and *ye shall thou and thy house be saved*; that is, these are the means you and your family must take for your salvation; there are no other. By *believing in the Lord Jesus Christ*, the apostle meant, not merely a belief that such a person actually lived on earth, (for of this, doubtless, the jailor was well assured, and the devils also know that he is both the cause of life, and final judge, and therefore tremble;) but the faith proposed, was to confess the power of Jesus both to forgive sin, and to subdue its growth, by the spirit of his grace; and to confirm the sense of the advice, we may observe, that after the evangelist St. John hath set forth at large the life and death of the Lord Jesus in his Gospel, he concludeth with these words: *But these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name*; (xvth ch. 31st verse) in other words, that your faith in him might sanctify you. And St. Paul asserts the same (Rom. x. 4.) in these words, *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.*

believeth. So that by these words it is evident, that the grand principle to be obtained and established on our parts, to forward our salvation, is *faith*; that is to say, a sure trust and confidence in the mercies of God, whereby we feel secure, that God hath forgiven *original depravity* for *Christ's sake*, and will also blot out the stain of *actual sin*, upon *sincere repentance* and *amendment of life*; and this likewise on account of what Christ has done *for us*, and not as a reward for any thing we *could have done without him*. Further, that through him we are released from the condemnation our corrupted nature had incurred, and are reconciled and received into favour, and placed upon fresh trial, as though our first parents had not offended God's justice, and deserved his anger. This is the faith required of us, and if we live up to this as the cause, principle, or motive of corresponding good works, there is no doubt but we shall find plentiful salvation at God's hand (through Jesus Christ), as did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who *believed*, and it was accounted to them for *righteousness*. But we must be very careful never to forget how they *proved* that this faith was *actual righteousness*, viz. by the Obedience that it wrought in them. As to Abraham in particular, his faith was so established concerning what God had *promised*, that he did not hesitate to sacrifice, even his *only son*, the instant so trying a command was given to him. And pure faith will be effectual to bring forth good works in *us* also, if it be such as God (the searcher of hearts) knoweth will produce fruit, if he pleases to try it, as he did that of his servant Abraham, for there can be but *one* faith that can please God, and obtain salvation. We must be steadfast to our life's end. He that wavereth (saith St. James), is like the waves of the sea. Thus we see, the instant St. Peter failed in faith, or confidence in the strong hold, he was in danger of *drowning*. We must,

therefore, earnestly and incessantly pray for the gift of *that* faith, for the attaining which, the one sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, hath been offered by Christ, and that so fully, and perfectly, that no other is *necessary*; and which will be granted to all who ask it in sincerity, and purity of heart. *This*, then, is the one true method, or principle, through which we must apply the merits of Christ's death; even a faith that so worketh by *love*, as naturally to produce *obedience*. The brazen serpent was one type or sign of this faith in Christ; for as all who looked up to *that*, with dependence on God's goodness, and power, as the means of healing their bodily stings, were cured; so all who look up to Christ, with a true and lively faith, shall most surely be delivered from the grievous burden of their sins, whereby if the Tempter terrify us with dismal fears, or if the infirmities to which flesh is heir, surprise us into *accidental* falling, (as who is free from both assaults in this state of trial, and vale of misery) let us not faint through vain terror, and doubts, but let us hold fast our belief, that he that has promised is faithful, and able to perform, and then neither death, hell, nor judgment, shall finally harm us.

Let us behold Christ crucified with the eye of the *heart*, and that will conquer every other danger; let us trust to nothing else as the *cause* of our salvation, but his death and suffering; nor desire *other* witness, but such an *earnest of the Spirit*, as to live like his true disciples, humbly preparing ourselves by his grace and help, for joining the blessed society of his purified and elect people, when he shall come at the last day to judge both quick and dead. May Christ's all-powerful intercession obtain this blessed portion for all who hear and read his word, for all who love his appearing, even as the Father hath promised to give him all who come unto him. Amen.

DISCOURSE XIII.

Upon the Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ.

A SERMON FOR EASTER DAY.

ROMANS iv. 25.

*He was delivered for our offences, and raised again
for our justification.*

IF on any occasion the excellency and desire of spiritual, or pure worldly happiness, hath roused your minds to close and serious thoughts, there can be no doubt but that the subject of *this* discourse will fix your attention as earnestly, as any wonder, or blessing, that ever engaged your meditations; for it relates to no less than that important and comfortable article of the christian faith, the *resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead*. This was a circumstance of such mighty consequence to the cause of *christianity*, that our blessed Savior, in his high wisdom, judged it expedient to remain forty days upon the earth, after he had risen from death to life, in order that the hearts of his disciples might be established by sensible and indisputable conviction, as to the

truth of the event, that they might confirm the faith of *others* by the assurance of their *own* ocular demonstration of it. St. Luke, in the first chapter of his history of the Acts of the Apostles, doth clearly assert, that Christ continued with his disciples the full time above mentioned, for the gracious purpose doubtless (now that he was glorified on earth) of instructing them, who were to be the teachers of *others*, in the perfect knowledge of this truth, which is the ground of all our hope of immortality, the leading principle of our whole religion. This it is evident our blessed Master saw proper to be effected before he ascended up to his Father, there to be glorified by a triumphant reception, after his faithful conflict and perfect victory. Now the satisfaction to be derived from his belief, is so truly great and necessary, that *without* it, every other part of revelation would prove deficient to our happiness; for as the apostle justly argues, in the 1 Cor. xv. 13. and the following verses: If it is not true that *there is a resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen. And if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be, that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And the further consequence would be, (saith he) that as your faith is false, ye are yet in your sins:—Christ's resurrection being our pledge or security, that he has atoned for them; so that in this case, all they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished, in that they died in the assurance that he would save them; for if in this life only we have hope in Christ (says he) we are of all men most miserable, because here we expect chiefly to suffer with him, and for him; but hereafter, by the power of his resurrection, we hope to reign with him; but if he is yet under the power of death, nor yet restored*

stored to his former heavenly glory, then desperate is our condition indeed. But let us cast away all such false despondency, and idle notions, for, (says the Apostle) now (that is, *most assuredly*) is *Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept* (the undeniable proof of the resurrection of the body), and for this reason, that since by Adam came death (as by his transgression all are subject to *mortality*), so by *man*, that is, the *second Adam*, came also the resurrection of the dead; for *as in Adam all died, so in Christ* (or by virtue of his victory over sin and death) *shall all be made alive*. But we have further testimony that Christ is risen again, for otherwise it could not be true, that he is *ascended up into heaven*, nor that he sent down the Holy Ghost from above, without which the apostles could not have wrought the miracles they did in *his name*; nor otherwise could he be said to be *sitting at the right hand of his heavenly Father*, having the rule in heaven and earth, reigning, as the prophet David saith, from *sea to sea*; neither could he be the judge of both living and dead, to reward the good, and punish the wicked, at the end of the world.

In order therefore, that these successive links in the chain of our christian profession might hold fast together, and continue established by this keystone of their union, it pleased the Lord of life and glory, not to deprive his disciples speedily of the *real* assurance of his bodily presence among them, but he chose so considerable a space of time as forty days, during which he might have full opportunity to declare unto them, by many and powerful signs, and arguments, that he had *conquered death*, in that he was also most truly *arisen again* to life. St. Luke informs us, that for the purpose of making them fully acquainted with the history of himself, and the redemption of mankind, he began at what *Moses had related on the subject*,

then proceeded to what the latter prophets had said, and expounded to them *all* the prophecies that were written throughout the scriptures *concerning him*, so as to establish them most fully in the truth of his resurrection, so long before foretold, and as it was the fulfilling of various other predictions. This therefore he thought proper to verify by *DEED*, as the scriptures expressly declare, by his often appearing to different persons at sundry times. The *particulars* of these are almost needless to be related, as you read them, and have them repeated to you so frequently; but as we cannot too *often* or too *fully* instruct the ignorant, we may refer to the xxviiith of St. Matthew, where we read, that first Christ sent his angels to the sepulchre where they had laid him, to convince certain holy women, who came to pay their respects to his tomb, that there remained nothing but the linen in which he had been buried. By this these women were sufficiently satisfied, and they declared the same *in public*. The account of our Lord's *first* appearance in *PERSON* is recorded to have been to *Mary Magdalene*, and after that to certain other women, John xx. His next appearance was to his faithful servant Peter, and then to two other disciples, who were journeying to the neighbouring village of Emmaus: he shewed himself also to his disciples when assembled together, in a very private manner, (the doors being shut) for fear of the violent prejudice of the Jews, which might have proceeded to cruel extremities of punishing and dispersing them: at another time, Peter and Thomas saw him, being together at the sea of Tiberias, with other disciples, employed in their common occupation of *fishing*. In the 1 Cor. xv. 6. it is recorded that he was seen of more than *five hundred brethren at once*, and this was in the mount of Galilee, where Jesus appointed them to come by a message of an holy angel, saying, *Behold I go before you*

you into Galilee, as I said unto you, Matth. xxvi. 32. After this he was seen in particular of St. James, and last of all he was publicly present with *all the apostles*, who were purposely assembled (doubtless by order of divine providence), that they might *join in the testimony of his being seen go into heaven.* As we have now brought together the various times of Christ's appearing to his disciples, in order to revive your memories, and confirm your faith in this point, to which end certainly the blessed Jesus tarried so long from the glorious regions of his heavenly inheritance; so at the different periods of these personal revelations of himself, he afforded every possible proof that their weak and uninspired hearts might need, to assure them of the *reality* of his appearance; for he shewed them his *hands and his feet*, and his precious side that was pierced by the unrelenting foldiers' spears. He desired them to touch him, and handle him, that they might be *assured* he was not a ghost, or spirit, since mere phantoms had neither *flesh or bone* as he had. Sometimes he likewise *eat* with them, to convince them that every *bodily* sense remained *entire*. But his chief employment, during his continuance on earth, after his resurrection, was the discoursing to them of the *everlasting kingdom of God his Father*,—the end and best argument of his *rising from the dead*. Further, he took the opportunity of the power he had purchased for them, to *open their understandings*, before blinded by the veil of natural infirmity, and misguided reason; and by this divine instruction they immediately discovered the truth of all holy scripture; for he said to them expressly, *Thus it is written, and thus behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, that forgiveness and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations of the world.*

Thus you see, what a very necessary article of our christian faith this is, since Christ himself

judged it proper to afford such convincing signs and proofs of it, during so long a time after the event took place. And as he in mercy used such diligence to deliver comfort and instruction to us on this subject, let us pray continually for wisdom to receive it, for the blessed ends he intended. For neither did he die for *himself*, nor rise again for any *necessary* effect of his *own* happiness; but as the apostle affirms, 1 Cor. xv. 3. *He died for our sins, was delivered up for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* (Rom. iv. 25.) that is, by dying, he paid the *debt* or ransom for us; by rising again, he confirmed that God was *satisfied* with it, and that in him, Christ Jesus, we are *justified or accepted*.

What comfort must arise in the heart of every sound believer, when he feels the assurance that *Christ died once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* (Heb. ix. 26.) That by his death he hath taken away sin, and the curse attending it. That he has destroyed death, and overcome the *devil*, who had the power of death. *Hell, condemnation, or death eternal*, which all denote the same condition of *endless misery*, are swallowed up by *Christ's victory*. If at any time, man should doubt of his Savior's triumph, his mind will receive *peace* from this circumstance of his *glorious resurrection*. For if death could not keep Christ under his dominion, but that he shewed his superiority by *rising again*, it is very clear that the power of death is *destroyed*. And if death be conquered, then it must follow of course, that sin (whereof death was the wages or punishment) must be destroyed also*.

* That is to say so far, as that the heavy curse pronounced against it is taken away, (according to the gospel covenant) from all who truly believe in Christ Jesus; and *so live* as to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior; although while in a weak and earthly tabernacle they cannot perfect praise. In short, *all who live in godly sincerity in Christ Jesus*, may be truly said to be justified by Him.

Now if death and sin are vanquished, then is the devil's tyranny evidently at an end, because he had the power of death, in that he was the *author* of sin; therefore as Christ triumphed over them *all*, by virtue of his resurrection, (it not being possible for his Almighty power to be restrained by them) then is it true that he is our *Savior* INDEED, and all who maintain a *true faith* in him, may triumphantly exult with the prophet Hoshea and the apostle St. Paul, and say, *O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory! For blessed be God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

As there are many lively types, signs, or figures, of our blessed Master's victory, recorded in the *Old Testament*, and which may improve the serious mind occasionally to compare with the Redeemer's actions, we shall specify some of the most expressive, as they present themselves in order. Thus Christ is prefigured to us in the act of Sampson when he slew the lion: by David when he delivered the lamb out of the lion's mouth; as likewise when he slew the giant Goliath. Again, the case of *Jonas*, who was swallowed by the whale, and after remaining three days therein, was returned alive upon the land; *that* conveys a lively representation of Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is also clearly foretold by the prophets in the *Old Testament*, and confirmed by the apostles in the *New*. *He hath spoiled principalities and powers*, (saith the apostle, Col. ii. 15.) *and made a shew of them, openly triumphing over them in it.* This then is the mighty power of him in whom we believe.

But the work of our redemption would have been but *half* complete, if we had only been freed from sin by his *death*; for even had the creature been so entirely renewed in his mortal body, as in no respect to have been subject to the power of sin while he *lived*: had even human frailty, disease,
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and pain, been utterly destroyed, yet without hope, without assurance of rising again and living for ever, men must have been most unhappy creatures; for to have had always before them the end of their existence, they could not, in that case, have been properly restored to the blessed hope and glorious prospect set before them at their first creation. But now, by Christ's resurrection, life and immortality are brought to light; by this he hath obtained power from on high, not only to endue us with righteousness, to give us the unction of his blessed spirit HERE; but he has afforded us assurance also, that he is gone before to open for us the gates of everlasting life; to prepare a place for us, that where he is there we may be also; and with a view to this grand foundation of our joy, St. Peter speaketh, 1 Ep. i. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*

Thus hath Christ's resurrection wrought for us both righteousness and life; it is a subject of such vast importance and joy, that it may be profitable to you to repeat the glorious consequences in a few plain words. The Son of God then, was subject to death and the grave, and triumphed over them, in order that we might build hope of rising again to life by virtue of his power. He paid the ransom for sin, which otherwise must have been set down to our account. He died to check and destroy the growing power of the devil in human nature, and to rescue us from his captivity. And he rose again to prove that he had the reward of his suffering, even the sending down his Holy Spirit to direct and purify our hearts, to keep us from sin, and to guide us in the way of all holiness. So justly doth the

Psalmist say, *Truth shall flourish out of the earth, and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.* Which words we may thus explain of Christ's resurrection: that from the earth is Christ the everlasting Son of God, now risen to life; that the true righteousness of the Holy Ghost hath visited us from above, and hath been, or will be poured out most plentifully upon all the world. *Thus is salvation nigh all those that fear him, that glory may dwell in the land.* (Psalm lxxxv. 4, 9, 10.) Thus is glory and praise most due to God on high, or as the Psalmist expresses it, *Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

And to all who through the temptation of the devil, and the effects of a weak and corrupted nature, do still entertain *fears, or doubts, and scruples*, concerning the riches and happiness that have been purchased, and are in store for them, let them strengthen their minds by this *assurance*, that the eternal truth and power of Christ's resurrection was purposely manifested, to *quiet and confirm* their conscience, by this testimony of their *peace*. There can be no fear but that *all* will experience the benefits of their Lord's rising from the dead, who receive it in a *true faith*; that is, with a truly *penitent heart*. If you feel in yourselves a full and holy *purpose of amendment of life*, you have then the *pledge* of your salvation within you. You have received *one* great benefit of his body once broken, and of his blood once shed for the entire clearing away the effect and penalty of your *sins*. *True repentance*, I say, (that is, *sorrow* for sin, manifested by *REFORMATION*) is a *sure token* that you have already in a degree profited by the gifts Christ rose to procure for the recovery of fallen creatures.

When you partake of the *signs* of Christ's body in the holy sacrament, you receive by *faith* the benefits that sacrifice was intended to convey, which was to have the power of the Father, the Son, and
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the Holy Ghost, to dwell in you; to supply you with *grace*; to strengthen you against your enemies; and to comfort you with the *divine influence*. You trust in the sacrifice of this body, as the *cause* of preparing you for the possession of *everlasting righteousness*; to assure you of the immortality of your soul, and of eternal happiness. For as the apostle saith, (Eph. ii. 5.) *Even when we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ, for by grace ye are saved through faith.* In other words, the power of Christ's resurrection is the security of our hope: the *cause* of it was God's *free mercy*, not our own *deserts*; and the *means* whereby we apply it, or seek for it, is *steadfast faith*, or belief in the truth of his promises. Thus are we said to be *changed*, or rescued, from mortal and eternal death, to everlasting life, *to be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son*, (Col. i. 13.) upon which glorious place our hearts and desires, and conversation should be fully set, *even now*. However wonderful these things may seem to weak and sinful dust and ashes, we must console our fainting, unbelieving spirits, that the *Lord is mighty to save*; that nothing is impossible with God; that he doth not act like man by ways that may be judged, and easily found out. Great doubtless, is the mystery of holiness, or man's salvation, which things are so high and wonderful that the very angels *desire to look into them*. We must pray then for *faith* to perceive *enough* of this mystery of Christ's coming in the flesh, and dying for us, as to profit our souls in this our day of *trial*, by *being sober, and filled with hope unto the end*, that we may obtain the further *grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* 1 Peter i. 13.

If our faith is pure, we shall believe that God is able to bring to pass what he hath said. This is the faith we must labour always to bring with us to Christ's table, when we approach to partake of the
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holy sacrament, or memorial of his body broken and blood shed for us ; which blessed rite was instituted to nourish and increase our confidence that *Christ is able to work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, provided we use the gracious means he has appointed to keep *alive* our trust in him, and do not grieve his holy spirit to depart from us. And to *prove* that our faith is steadfast, let our repentance be *visible* ; let our desire and resolution of amendment, and future obedience of God's laws, declare that we do truly *believe* all he has *promised*, and all he has *threatened* ; let us from henceforth strive to say with St. Paul, *Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we also look for the Savior. The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself* (Phil iii. 20, 21.). So that you see, we are not left without a *witness*, even in *ourselves* ; for the spirit beareth witness within us, that we are the children of God, if so be we walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit * ; if by true repentance and amendment of life, we turn unto God, because these are the never failing signs of a lively faith, and the grace of God working in us in consequence of it through Jesus Christ. God grant we may all daily experience and *increase* in this christian walk, through the intercession and for the merits sake of our Blessed Redeemer ; to whom, &c.

* That is, according to St. Paul's interpretation, if we do not wilfully serve the law of sin in our fleshly members ; if we not only delight in the law of God after the inner man, that is, not only confess it is right, just, and good, but labour to make the law of the mind correct, and govern the law or evil motions of the flesh.

DISCOURSE XIV.

The Same Subject.

The Same Text.

IN the former discourse upon this most interesting subject of our Lord's resurrection from the dead; it was very fully and plainly shewn you, what numerous benefits we may receive in consequence of this glorious event. Since, as Christ thereby hath effectually conquered all our deadly foes, in order to rescue us from their *dominion*; we through faith embrace the blessings obtained for us, by virtue of this almighty act. Indeed, we may be said to be risen again with Christ to life eternal, inasmuch as we *believe* that our bodies will be raised from the dead, and glorified in heaven with their Savior. And as the *seal* or *pledge* of this inheritance, we do in the mean time partake of the influence of his Holy Spirit in our hearts, by whose help, as before explained, we are enabled to walk in holiness; in the fear of the Lord; and to subdue all such corrupt and evil affections, as being contrary to the will and pleasure of God, would unfit us for a place in his kingdom.

Now the due consideration of these truths ought to lead us to *shew* our faith in time to come, by
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walking in newness of life. For what will it profit us, saith St. Peter, (2 Ep. ii. 20, 21.) if after we have escaped the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end of such being worse with them than the beginning; for it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. For by so doing they come under the description of the proverb, *The dog is turned to his vomit again, and the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire.* By this alarming observation, the Apostle intends to point out the great danger to which all careless, indifferent, and sinning persons expose themselves; in that the case of those who shut their eyes against the clear light of the gospel is much worse, than if they had never been converted to it at all; because the ingratitude and perverseness of an apostate christian, in sinning against such plain and happy methods of salvation, must necessarily render him more incurable and justly condemnable than any heathen, that was never brought to the knowledge of such saving truth. And this likewise maketh good our blessed Savior's declaration, *that to whom much is given, of him will much be required.* At the same time, this argument doth by no means encourage any one, especially the christian, to continue in ignorance, that he may have no more to answer for than the heathen; for God, in the wise order of his providence, hath pleased to afford the one opportunities, which are denied to the other; and it depends on the former to accept or reject them, which, as he prefers and improves or neglects, will either advance his happiness or determine his condemnation.

Now the equity of this must be very evident; for surely, it will most justly increase our shame and punishment, after having received a religion that clearly sets before us a free pardon for sin (on condition

dition of repentance and using the *means* of grace), if we wilfully return to the exercise of all impure and sinful actions. Surely it is the excess of folly, after being blessed with the gift of *working out our salvation*, to throw it away. It is little short of madness, to forfeit the title to the inheritance now *promised* us, by yielding to the foul and fleeting indulgence of sin; which will certainly deprive us of it. Nay what perverse *ingratitude* is it also, when our Savior Jesus Christ, of his unbounded mercy, has promised to come unto us, and to dwell with us, to refuse the benefit of so blessed a guest? To grieve his Holy Spirit, by our sinful lives and wilful disobedience, and thus to *drive him from us*? Violently to reject the best friend of our souls; and instead of the spirit of all grace and goodness, to prefer our most bitter enemy, even the malicious author of all evil and misery. If you now refuse the gentle calls of *mercy*, the pressing invitation of your Savior, who freely offereth of his Spirit to *purify* and *establish* your souls, what is it but boldly to slight the salvation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; for where one is, there is the wisdom, power, and goodness of God's whole mysterious nature united. Alas! for *their* fate in the dreadful day of the Lord, who persist in so treacherous a denial of the Lord who bought them. Be advised in time; trifle not with the welfare of your immortal spirits. Never (depend upon it) will any creature be qualified to *enter into the joy of the Lord*, who despises the *means*, he in his high wisdom and rich mercy hath appointed, during this state of *trial*, to secure the dignity to which he would in mercy raise them. Will you, through wicked folly, throw away what has been so dearly purchased for you? Will you remain obstinately blind to the great light that is shining all around you? Rouse yourselves from this most dangerous lethargy. Take courage. *Put on the whole armor of God, that*

ye may be able to stand in the evil day against your enemies, who would fain destroy you by shaking your trust in Christ: for in proportion as that is weak, we all fall naturally into the tempter's snares.

In order to strengthen your good resolutions, remember that ye are redeemed from your vain conversation, (that is, the sinful ways wherein ye walked formerly) not with silver and gold, or such corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, (1 Pet. i. 18, 19, 20.) who verily was fore-ordained, before the foundation of the world, (to this good work) but was manifest (only) in these last times for you. That is, in short, strengthen and assure your faith, and hope towards God, by Christ's rising from the dead. As, therefore, you have hitherto walked in the vain lusts of your own minds, and so displeased God to the danger of your souls; so now like obedient children, that are purified by faith, incline to the ways that God pointeth out to you, that ye may happily receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. And as heretofore ye have yielded your members servants unto uncleanness, and unto iniquity, even now yield your members servants unto righteousness unto holiness.

All true christians will glory in this ground-work of their faith, that their Lord and Savior is risen from death to life, and will shew their belief by following the example of his resurrection in their present lives, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, Rom. vi. 4. *That as we are buried with him by baptism into death**, so let us daily die to sin,

* The original ceremony of a general immersion in baptism was to shew, by the sign of being buried under water, that we were to die to sin. And as Christ arose from death, to the glory of God the Father; so by the action of rising again out of the water, was represented our duty of imitating him by walking in newness of life. The ceremony of baptism representing to us, by an outward visible sign, the washing away of our original defilement.

by mortifying the evil and corrupt affections of our bodies. So then, if we are arisen with Christ, through faith, unto the hope of everlasting life, let us follow this *sign* also, which Christ hath left us in his resurrection, of rising from an old life, or habit of evil, to one that is new and better. And hereby shall we shew that we are already risen with him in this sense, if we seek the things that belong to his kingdom, if we set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth.

Now no one hardly can be so ignorant as not to know what are the earthly things that we should die to, or put away from us; or what are the heavenly objects that we should constantly have in view. But as many, though living in the clear light of the christian gospel, are blind to the more necessary and self-evident truths of their religion, (even to a degree that is scarcely credible) you are desired only to turn to the iiii chap. of the Epistle to the Coloss. and 5th verse, where it will be impossible for you to mistake the Apostle's exhortation thus plainly delivered: *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections, evil concupiscence, (or desires) and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience, in which things ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.* But now (says he) ye must put away all these likewise, viz. anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of your mouth: lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds.

These then are the earthly things which St. Paul exhorteth you, as christians, to cast from you, and to wean your hearts from them, for all who follow these things declare themselves to be earthly: since these be the fruits of the disobedience of the earthly Adam: these it becomes all christians to mortify daily, and the way to do it, is by constant diligence to avoid every degree of temptation that

may lead to any degree of yielding to those corrupt desires, and then your bodies will be prepared to rise to righteousness, and go on to greater perfection.

On the other hand, the heavenly objects that should engage our thoughts and practice, are those virtues which we shall possess in full perfection, when we are delivered from this prison of the body, provided we cultivate them while we are in it. We must, therefore, *as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on bowels of long suffering, patience, or forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. (Col. iii. 13.) &c. Above all these things, put on charity, (that is, universal love, or good will, and christian allowance for others) which is the very bond of perfectness.*

Now if these divine virtues do appear in the conduct of your future lives, it is an undeniable proof that you are risen with Christ, and that you are the true children of that heavenly Father, from whom, as from the fountain of all good, proceedeth all those gifts and graces. By this change, I say, you will be assured in yourselves, that your *conversation is in heaven*, where your hope is, and not on earth, enslaved by the sensual appetites of the flesh, or animal nature. You should even keep in mind, that you have been cleansed and renewed by the sacrifice of Christ for you, that henceforth ye should not serve sin, but obey God in holiness and righteousness all the days of your lives. Beware then of resisting such valuable grace, whereunto ye are called by him who died to save you, lest you increase God's judgments against you both in this life and the next, by provoking the Almighty to leave you to yourselves, as a punishment for despising his most holy laws and sacraments, and abusing such easy and gracious means of correcting your sinful inclinations. Instead, then,
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of trifling with your day of grace, apply yourselves to live in Christ, that is, so to obey him that he may live in you, for if ye have *his* help and favour, ye have the foretaste of everlasting life *already* in you, then nothing can hurt you. Consider only the reproach that Christ himself objecteth to all who continue in wilful darknes, as related in St. John v. 40. *Ye will not come to me* (says he) *that ye might have life.* Reflect upon the abundance of his mercy in offering free pardon for all your sins already committed, and the wonderful blessing of being renewed into his favour again. And that none may doubt, to the danger of their souls, he vouchsafeth this ample security against every fear, by bestowing upon all, who believe in him, the spirit of his grace, to do according to his good pleasure, whereby he may be truly said to be *now* dwelling in all such faithful servants. We have nothing to do, therefore, but to close with these offers of mercy; when we experience good thoughts, to pursue them; when we be prompted to good actions, to fulfil them to the utmost power we have; when the devil trieth to *shake our faith*, by evil suggestions, to drown them in *immediate earnest prayer for help*; when he tempteth us to commit wickedness, to determine, by God's help, to avoid every thing that we know must offend the eyes of his perfection. To strive after the mastery of our sins, by the practice of the opposite virtues, which perhaps we have too often broken. Thus, if we have offended in our *tongue*, let us use it in future in *praising* God instead of *blaspheming* him. If we have slandered or hurt our neighbour, we must do him justice by *word* or *deed*, for if we have the power of restitution, and withhold it, our confessions and *repentance* will not be accepted by the Lord; because to condemn the *sin*, and yet *delight* in it, is most impious contradiction and mockery together. Nor is it enough to complete the character of a *christian*,

that we *abstain from evil*, but we must perform *absolute good*. In what shape soever, therefore, you have formerly offended, confirm your repentance by serving God, and loving your neighbor.

It is true, indeed, he is powerful, and our natural appetites ungovernable upon occasion, and most difficult is the task of ruling a nature so universally corrupted by the taint of primitive sin, as that we now inherit, in consequence of the fall of our first parents from a state of innocence and purity. But still, we have the greatest encouragement from this declaration of our blessed Savior, (*JOHN xvi. 38.*) *Be of good cheer* (saith he) *for I have overcome the world for you.* In short, *Christ hath put all his enemies* (and ours of course,) *under his feet*, and the glorious event of this day confirms the victory to us past all doubt.

Sin (saith the Apostle) *shall not have dominion over you, for ye are now under grace*; as though he had said, although your natural powers are *weak*, yet *Christ is risen again to strengthen them*, and assist your infirmities by the righteousness of his Holy Spirit during your present day of warfare. Trust then in Christ's mercy, and strive to purge out the *old leaven* of sin that corrupteth your lives before God, that ye may become *a new lump*, and that God may delight in you *so purified*. Mortify and sacrifice the worldly appetites and affections of your bodies, for Christ, our Easter Lamb, is offered for us to destroy the power of sin, to deliver us from the consequences of our depraved imperfect nature, and to set us an example to die to sin in our present life, that we may be prepared to wear the robe of righteousness wherewith we shall be clothed at the last day, when we shall arise to receive a different portion for ever.

As therefore the Jews did eat *their passover*, their Easter Lamb, and kept the feast in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt, or tem-
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poral bondage, so let us keep *our* Easter feast in thankful remembrance of Christ's mighty deliverance of us from our *spiritual* slavery, that is, in reconciling us to God the Father, through the essential virtue of his passion, and for the blessed hope he hath left us of the certainty of our redemption, from far more dangerous captivity, by his resurrection. As the Jews kept their feast in abstaining from the use of leavened bread, for the space of seven days, let us christians keep our holy day in a more *spiritual* manner, by abstaining, not merely from the leaven, or forbidden mixture in our daily bread, *but from the old leaven of malice and wickedness*: from all the leaven or mixture, of corrupt doctrine, which (as a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,) will infect our souls. Let us shew the effects of this wonder upon our hearts, by feeding upon the bread of purity all our lives, even the truth of Christ's doctrine, who came down from heaven, and is ascended thither again, that he might become the bread of life to the soul of every true believer. By so conducting ourselves, we shall fully declare that Christ's gifts and graces have had their *designed effect* upon us; that we really understand, and believe the power and end of his resurrection, since if our *faith* thereof worketh to the production of *virtue* in our *life*, and to make us conformable to the *example* and signification it was intended to *convey*, we shall be assured of *rising again* to everlasting glory, through the infinite goodness and mercy of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. To whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit be all glory and thanksgiving for ever and ever. Amen.

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 us, we shall fully declare that Christ's gifts
 of every true believer. By so conducting our-
 that he might become the bread of life to the soul
 down from heaven, and descended thither again,
 even the death of Christ's disciples, who came
 by feeding upon the bread of purity of our lives,
 new the effects of this wonder upon our hearts,
 the whole lump) will quicken our souls. Let us
 right doctrine, which (as a whole heaven leaven-
 cake) : from all the leaven or mixture of cor-
 out daily bread, but from the all leaven of malice and
 inwardly from the heaven, or forbidden mixture in
 loaf of seven days, let us Christians keep our holy
 abiding from the life of heavenly bread, for the
 his resurrection. As the Jews kept their feast in
 deliverance from far more dangerous captivity, by
 hope he hath left us of the certainty of our re-
 essential virtue of his passion, and for the blessed
 reconciling us to God the Father, through the
 and of us from our present slavery, that is, in
 thankful remembrance of Christ's mighty deliver-
 every bondage, to let us keep our Easter feast in

DISCOURSE XV.

An Homily concerning the Worthie receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

LUKE XXII. 19.

This do in remembrance of me.

THE receiving the blessed sacrament of the Lord's supper, is *one* of the most powerful means held forth in Chirst's church (of which we all profess to be members) to strengthen our faith and confidence in our blessed Savior; and to obtain from him those needful graces, which the very best men require to have improved, to keep them stedfast in their calling, and to enable them to *go on to that perfection*, so incumbent on all real christians to strive to obtain.

It behoves us therefore to give this necessary proof of our belonging to Chirst, and that we are not ashamed to be called his disciples indeed, nor unwilling to be qualified, in his *own way*, for a place in his holy kingdom, when we depart hence; for *whosoever shall be ashamed of me, or of my words, (saith our blessed Lord) of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*

The

The great love of our Savior Christ towards mankind, doth not only appear in that inestimable work of our redemption, which he purchased for us, at the dear price of his most precious blood, and bitter passion; but also, in the wise and gracious provision he made, that this most merciful sacrifice might be kept in *continual remembrance*, and thereby produce such good effects in us, as were consistent with its blessed *design*; for as tender parents are not satisfied to get a good fortune, and valuable possessions for their children, but take care also that they may be *preserved* and *secured* for their benefit: so our blessed Lord did not think it enough to procure for us the renewal of his Father's love and favor, (which is no less than the inexhaustible fountain of all good, even eternal life itself) but he likewise contrived such ways, in his divine wisdom, whereby we might apply the blessings he *had* obtained for us, so as to reap real advantage by them. Among *other* means of grace that he hath left us, the public celebration, or acknowledgment of the *memorials* of his precious death, by partaking of the Lord's supper, is one of the most awful and useful that our religion contains. For however lightly it may be regarded by *some*, yet when it is sincerely received by the *faithful*, it not only becomes instrumental in correcting the general weakness of mankind (which in consequence of a degenerated nature, is more ready to *remember injuries* than *benefits*) but it helps to promote and strengthen the growth of the inward man, in joy and peace, and in working grateful praise towards that Blessed Redeemer, by whose grace we become more cautious in our future life and conversation; thus by the spiritual nourishment we seek in this ordinance, it becomes gradually as *meat and drink*, to do the will of God in all things.

And as we read in the xiith of Exod. that God of old ordained, that the astonishing mercies and de-

liverances

liverances which he shewed his people, should be kept in remembrance by the ceremony of their eating the *passover*, and the use of other particular rites attending it; so our Blessed Savior in the *place* of that holy institution, practised by the Jews, has established for the observation of all true christians, that the remembrance of his great mercy towards the souls of men, by his gracious death and sufferings, should be kept up by the institution of *that* sacrament, which we call the Lord's Supper.

To this all humble christians are invited as grateful guests, to feed their *own* souls by an *actual* partaking; for we cannot reasonably suppose, that the employing *others* will profit us, as is the case where only the priest or minister receiveth, it being most natural to believe, that as the body is supported by the food it takes *itself*, so can the soul be benefited only, by its own *particular obedience*, and regular application of the means of grace. Indeed the express commandment obligeth us *all* to communicate in *person*. These are the words, *Do ye this, drink ye ALL of this*, and the express promise doth further encourage it: *This is my body which is given for you*, consequently we must *ourselves* be partakers of the outward signs, that remind us of this sacrifice of Christ. It is highly necessary also, that when we receive this holy sacrament, it should be done in the most devout, and solemn manner; lest as medicine which is intended for the restoration of bodily health, when *misapplied*, may do more injury than benefit; so this most comfortable cordial of the soul, if taken unworthily (that is, without consideration, without an humble mind, prepared by a due sense of its *unworthiness*, and great need of help and favor) may provoke the gracious author of all good to punish such irreverent presumption. As a caution against this, St. Paul saith, *He that eateth or drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh his own condemnation*, that is, he thereby sets his own seal to

to the judgment he deserves. But here it is necessary that the true sense of this word *unworthily*, be made most clear to you; for otherwise, none of us, not the *very best*, could venture to close with their Lord's command in this respect; because strictly, we are *all* unworthy of *any* favor, especially so great a one as this. Nay we receive this sacrament in faith, that it will prove instrumental, through God's blessing, on our future endeavours, to become daily *better* prepared to serve him every time we shall have the opportunity of this particular indulgence. By *unworthily*, therefore, the apostle here means a careless, *indecent* manner of outward behavior; and also, not being previously and sincerely resolved, to amend our lives, not considering the *nature* of this sacrament; or as the Apostle words it, *Not considering the Lord's body*. Not weighing the infinite *value* of the sacrifice for sin, nor being truly sensible that we need God's grace; that is, a *further power* to help our weakness, than we find sufficient from our own mere will and ability. You are likewise to observe, that St. Paul was here particularly exhorting the Corinthians, a people who had positively behaved with the *greatest profaneness*, in the use of this sacrament, even by coming *drunken* to it, and by using it as a *common meal*. These he most earnestly counsels to *amend*, lest they should bring condemnation upon themselves, for such gross misconduct, in so solemn a duty; as doubtless every pious christian must allow, they might justly expect. But the Apostle does not intend to signify by this, that any are *truly worthy*, in a *spiritual* sense, of God's goodness to them; nor is there, I hope, the least danger of any of us ever coming *unworthily*, in the sense he *does* speak of; but the more unworthy you feel yourselves to be, in a truly religious and spiritual conviction wishing to become *better*, and resolving to *strive so to be*, the *safer* may you come, and the surer

Surer you will be of receiving grace to help in time of need; for the true wedding garments are *humility and faith*; and any of you who come thus clothed, need be under no fear of being accosted as the unprepared guest was at the great marriage supper in the gospel, *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?* All we have to do therefore, is to take the Apostle's advice in this respect, and so to examine ourselves, that we may *eat of that bread and drink of that cup with comfort*, which we certainly shall do, if we judge ourselves according to what has been said. But for your further instruction in this important duty, it is proper you should understand that there are *three* things positively required of all who would *worthily* approach the Lord's table, in a qualified and allowable sense of that word.

First, a right and serious *knowledge* of this holy ceremony.

Secondly, a stedfast faith in God's promises towards us, through Christ; and

Thirdly, some proof of the fruits thereof by change of life, and more increasing godliness in consequence of receiving this holy sacrament.

But before I enter upon the examination of these several heads, it will be further necessary that we be assured this sacrament of the Lord's supper is duly administered as our Lord and Savior commanded it to be done; as his holy Apostles used it after his death and resurrection; and as the pious fathers in the early christian church received it. For as one of them (St. Ambrose) observes, he is unworthy of the Lord's favour, who doth celebrate that holy mystery *otherwise* than was at *first* delivered by our Lord himself. Neither can he be called truly devout in the action, who presumeth to perform it in any other manner than the author gave it. We must therefore beware not to turn a solemn memorial, assisted by outward signs, into an actual sacrifice; nor to change a public communion

nion or *partaking* of it into a private eating, (as is done when in the Romish mass or service, the priest *alone* receives it); nor may we be content with *one* part, when *two* were *originally* administered; nor lastly, may we vainly apply it for the *dead*, when it was manifestly instituted to produce fruit to the *living*. In all these matters then, we shall do wiser to follow the advice of another ancient father, (St. Cyprian) that is, to cleave fast to the *first authority*, to abide by what Jesus Christ delivered, and to do in memory of him what he appointed, and his apostles followed and confirmed. Having premised this profitable caution, let us now proceed to consider the

First requisite for worthily receiving this holy sacrament, viz. that we have a *right knowledge* of the thing itself. Now of this we must be very clear, that a person who is totally ignorant of the nature and end of this holy ceremony can neither deservedly *esteem* it, nor effectually apply the *means* of grace; nor consequently experience the *benefits* held forth unto us in that sacrament; for either he will but *lightly* regard them, and in consequence of his *ignorance* account it a *slight offence*; or from the same cause, he will judge them wholly insufficient, to his still greater loss. In the former case, all such provoke God, by their wilful negligence, to punish them with various judgments; and in the *latter*, such unholy contempt exposes them to further punishment in another life.

Now it is from a sense of this danger, that you are constantly exhorted at these seasons, to *think of these things*; on the one hand, not wilfully to *slight* the *means of grace* God has mercifully vouchsafed you, and most certainly would never have appointed and commanded, if they were not *highly essential* to your *best interests*: nor, on the other hand, to attend the most solemn ordinance of our holy religion, as a mere matter of *form*, and without a

rational

rational inquiry and information as to its nature and design. Be persuaded then of the necessity and value of this advice, and no longer live in contempt of your Lord's command and proffers of love, but lay it to heart, that so you may be prepared to receive sure benefit from this christian feast; and to that end pray to God from this very hour, that he will please to remove all hinderances to your duty in this respect.

The advice of the Wise Man in the xxiiij chapter of Proverbs is very applicable on this occasion, and may preserve you from the mischief you are running into, by living in wilful ignorance of the most saving truths. *When (says he) thou sittest at an earthly king's table, take heed what things are set before thee.* Much more, surely, doth it concern us, when we approach the table of the King of Kings, carefully to enquire into the nature of that precious food which is there prepared for the nourishment of the *soul*: where we come, not to feed the senses and carnal appetites which tend to corruption, but to nourish the inward man unto immortal life; not to consider the mere outward elements as the *signs* of what has been done for us, but the heavenly graces and *helps* we are to receive by faith in our Lord's power and promises. But if man's wisdom is not sufficient to persuade you to acquire such a degree of knowledge respecting this holy sacrament, as will render your receiving it *profitable* to you, attend to the counsel of God himself in a similar case.* We read in the Old Testament, that he charged his people to teach their posterity not only the outward rites and ceremonies of the Lord's passover, but also the *cause* and *end* of that institution: whence we may be assured that an equal, if not a more perfect knowledge, is now required of the sacrifice of Christ, and *our* deliverance thereby, of which the Jewish passover was but a *figure*; and that they who are ignorant of the nature of this sacrament, cannot
receive

receive it with satisfaction or benefit. In the charge of St. Paul against the Corinthians, which was but lightly touched upon in the beginning of the discourse, he places *their* profane receiving of the Lord's supper entirely to their *ignorance of the thing itself*, and of the *signification and advantages* it was intended to convey; for they came to it irreverently, not discerning the Lord's body; that is, not duly considering what a solemn event it was designed to celebrate; nor the *cause* of such an astonishing instance of condescending love, even the offence of *our sins*, which had they *not* been atoned for and *forgiven*, would have inevitably subjected us to the pains of *eternal punishment*. Should we not do well then, to accept the Wise Man's warning to profit by the counsel of God, and the alarming example of these Corinthians, and be always on our guard lest we intrude ourselves at this table, while under a state of total blindness as to the services we are performing. Should we not gladly seize every opportunity of removing any doubts or fears concerning so important a part of our religion? Depend upon it, many sore and lasting judgments have befallen Christ's church from the indifference of its members to learn their duty in this particular. In truth, when we examine the case, what can more lower the value of God's religion than *ignorance* of it? What hath been the cause of such idolatrous errors having crept into it, but gross ignorance of its *purity*, and *spiritual* nature? Nay, what is the true reason of such general want of love and charity among those who *call* themselves christians, and pretend to belong to the same household of faith, but the ignorance of the christian graces this sacrament is calculated to improve. Be persuaded then *so* to study the design and end of this holy institution, that none of you may have a share in the visible decay of God's worship; that ye may not continue in any degree

degree of enmity or malice, but come with grateful joy and freedom to partake of the comfort prepared for all Christ's faithful servants.

And lest you should be discouraged by the thought of a greater knowledge being necessary, than you apprehend is possible in your humble stations to acquire, it is not expected that every man should be able to explain all the deep points of doctrine that this holy mystery may be supposed to contain; or to know (as our Lord himself expresses it) *the times, or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power* (Acts 1. 7.) but *thus much* it is obviously necessary for you all to know, that the Lord's supper is not a vain ceremony, a mere outward sign; it is no false figure of a thing absent, but a repetition of what our Lord actually said, and a memorial of what he did. It is intended to represent to us for ever, by certain signs, what he suffered for the salvation of mankind. It is truly, as the Scripture describeth it, (1 Cor. xth chap.) *the table of the Lord, the bread and cup of the Lord, the memorial of Christ's death*; yea, even the *communion* (or *partaking together*) of the body and blood of the Lord, that is, a desire of applying to ourselves the benefits procured to mankind by his body broken, and blood shed, through the secret working of the Holy Ghost, by whom alone we are united to Christ; and which grace, by humble faith in the receiver, is wrought in the hearts of all, in proportion to the *sincerity* of their belief: so that not only their souls are strengthened with the hope of eternal life, but they firmly trust, that their bodies also shall rise to immortal glory. Now on account of the proper understanding of this comfort and union, (which as it subsists between Christ and true believers, may justly be compared to the near relation between the body and the head,) the ancient fathers of the church were so fully convinced of the benefits derived from it to themselves,

selves, that they recommended the same to the people; and to shew that they thought it could not be too strongly expressed, some call it the *balsam of eternal life*; the *sure preservative against death*. Others, the *divine communion*; the *choicest blessing of our Saviour*; the *pledge of endless health*; the *shield of faith*; the *hope of resurrection*; the *food of immortality*; *vital grace*; and the *security of heavenly bliss*. Surely an ordinance that deserves such glorious titles, a feast thus honored by *Scripture*, and holy men, if we did but weigh its nature properly, would inflame our hearts with a constant desire of partaking of these holy mysteries, of feeding upon this bread of life, and thirsting after this cup of salvation. Not looking merely to the earthly creatures (the bread and wine before us) as containing in them any *charm* to procure these mighty blessings, but by what they *represent*, directing the eye of faith to cleave to that rock (even Christ) on which we may build good hope of everlasting life. In short, by the due observance of this command, by an humble participation of this sacrament, the faithful do more clearly *see*, and *know*, that the tender mercies of God are sealed to *them*; that Christ's satisfaction for their sins is *made*; and they become better assured of the remission or pardon of them, according as they constantly, diligently, and humbly avail themselves of this happy opportunity of growing in grace; for, by this act, they may experience *peace of conscience*, *increase of faith*, *stronger hope*, *overflowings of brotherly kindness*, with every other christian virtue; and to which it is certain none will ever attain, in any valuable measure, who remain blind to so prodigious a blessing. Employ every means then that may cleanse you from your carnal defilements; apply to the living water of God's word; profit by the earnest offers of his appointed ministers, that you may, in this your day of trial, taste and know both the spiritual food provided

provided in this holy sacrament, and the happy confidence and purifying effects it is capable of producing.

But besides such general plain knowledge of this Sacrament as above represented, we must, secondly, bring with us a pure and stedfast *faith*, not only that Christ's death was accepted by God for the redemption of all the world, for the remission of sins, and the reconciliation of God the Father to mankind, but also that Christ hath made, on his cross, a full and sufficient sacrifice for us, a perfect cleansing away of *our* sins, so as not to harbour any *other hope* of redemption, not to rely upon any *other* Saviour, Mediator, Advocate, or Intercessor, but *Christ only*; and to be able to say with the Apostle, *that he loved us, and gave himself for us*; for in so doing, we receive Christ's promise made in the institution, and apply it to *ourselves*: *Take, eat, this is my body which was given for THEE. Drink of this, for this is my blood which was shed for THEE.* This is to make Christ our own; *to be one with Christ, and Christ with us*; or, in other words, to apply his mercies to our own case; and in this act of faith, we need the help of no *other person*, no other sacrifice or oblation.

Now that faith is a necessary instrument in all these holy ceremonies, we may be well assured by St. Paul's assertion (in the xith chap. of the Hebrews, and the 6th verse) *that without faith it is impossible to please God.* One of the Fathers (St. Augustin), speaking of the overthrow of the Israelites in the wilderness, saith, that Moses, Aaron, and Phineas did eat the manna and pleased God, because (says he) they understood the *visible* meat *spiritually*; they hungered after it in a *spiritual* sense, that is, they seriously considered the miraculous *power* of that Being who sent it, no less than the *outward use* of it: they eat it in a *religious* sense, that they might be *spiritually* satisfied, or nourished; and as it is most true, that

animal food will not contribute to the health of the outward body, unless the stomach is in healthful state to digest it *properly*, no more can the inward man, or the spirit of man, receive benefit from the spiritual food held out to us in the means of grace, unless his soul, which is to receive it, be *sound in faith*; for it is by sincere faith (faith St. Cyprian), that we break or divide that whole bread, of which we all partake. The feast we make in this supper, is a *spiritual feast*, the nourishment of the *soul*; not an earthly, but a heavenly refreshment, an *invisible*, not a *bodily*, support; the strengthening of the *spirit*, not of the *flesh*. And to fancy that we *truly* receive, merely by eating and drinking of its *outward* signs, without faith in what these signs are intended to *signify*, viz. the satisfaction Christ has made for sin, by his body broken, and blood shed on the cross, and that he has thereby procured for us a principle of inward life, through the gift and operation of his Holy Spirit; without faith, I say, in this inward and spiritual grace, we do but *dream* about the matter; it is but a *formal* compliance with a mere *outward ceremony*, receiving the elements of bread and wine, and nothing *more*. Whereas we are taught by one of the earliest christian Councils (that of Nice), that we should lift up our minds in this sacrament by *faith*, and leaving these inferior, and earthly things, (that is, not building any virtue on a merely *ceremonial* obedience), *there* seek our spiritual support, where the sun of righteousness shineth for ever.

To conclude, take this lesson from an ancient Father of the Church: all ye who are truly desirous of coming to this holy feast, with a pure wish of receiving *spiritual food*, when you approach the holy table to partake of the signs of Christ's body and blood, look up with *faith* to the benefits to be derived to you by the *real* sacrifice of the body and blood

blood of your Saviour. Be cast down with humble astonishment, and reverence, at his *condescending love*. Desire those benefits with your *MIND*. Receive them with the will of your heart, and consider chiefly the *wants of the inward man*, then you will be in the way of taking them to your soul's comfort. This is a plain, short, and valuable explanation of the true and safe way of receiving the Lord's supper, and such, as hardly any can be so ignorant as not to understand.

Thus have you been shewn, as briefly as the serious nature of the subject will admit, that when we come to the Lord's table, we must strive to root out every degree of *unbelief*, all distrust of God's promises, in order that we may become living members of Christ's body; for the unbeliever, that is, he who wants *true christian faith*, cannot feed upon that precious body in the spiritual sense we have been describing, whereas the faithful have their very *life* in Christ, their *union* with him; they are, in a manner, incorporated, and grow up in him through the power of his grace. All you have to do then, is to *examine*, and prove yourselves *thoroughly*, (not flattering yourselves for any *appearance* of good, or excusing yourselves for the evil that besets you) and then you will be able to judge whether you are plants of the fruitful olive tree (however *tender*), whether you are living branches of the *true vine* (though but just beginning to shoot); whether you are *indeed* members of Christ's mystical body, (that is, partakers of his holiness, though perhaps as yet but *feeble*). In short, whether God hath in any measure purified your hearts by faith, to the sincere acknowledging of his gospel, and embracing his mercies, in *Jesus Christ*; so that ye may not only receive the *outward* sacrament, and obey the *positive* command, but that ye may obtain the *spiritual* things also, without which, the other is of

about the same value, as a body without a *soul* to animate it; and which is the true reason, that many come, and go away, and remain no better for the service. It is not the *figure*, but the *truth*; not the *shadow*, but the *substance*, that will therein profit us. We should not come there with indifference about continuing in the *death of sin*, but earnestly to seek the *life of righteousness*. Not to eat and drink our own condemnation, but to procure grace, and peace, and joy here, and eternal salvation when our race is run; which God grant we may all experience, through the merits of our blessed Lord and Saviour. To whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE XVI.

Second Part of the Homily on the same Subject.

JOHN VI. part of 53d verse.

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

THE remaining part of the discourse on this subject, relates chiefly to the *third* qualification before mentioned, as necessary to fit us for a due partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

Thirdly then, we should shew some *proof* of the fruit of our using this blessed *choice* means of grace, by a change of life, and increasing in holiness, every time we receive this holy ordinance. In the words of the text, you see our Blessed Master declares the absolute necessity of our eating his flesh and drinking his blood, in a *spiritual* sense, in order that we may *have life*; that is, a *power* within us, so to live here, that we may be *fitted* for the enjoyment of eternal life hereafter; or as the third division of the subject enjoins, that we may *bring forth more fruit*. To clear this passage of all difficulty, (for many of Christ's followers, from the blindness of their hearts, could not readily receive it) he informs them,

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that

that the words he spake were spirit and life. They had no conception how it was possible, or in what manner our Lord could offer his body and blood food to them; but doubtless when he had enlightened their understandings, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, vouchsafed to them *after his ascension*, they then perceived, that his words alluded to the sacrament he instituted, just before his crucifixion; they then considered the true nature of the *last supper*, and that the signs of his body and blood therein received and offered in memory of his sufferings and death, and the benefits thereby derived to mankind, were designed to direct their hearts to the spiritual meaning of his body being meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. And even to allay their fears, and remove their scruples for the present, he condescended, while he was with them, to inform them of the true meaning of his words; for knowing their ignorance, he saith, *Doth this offend you?* (that is, do you imagine I speak impossibilities?) *what and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?* Perhaps even this, is difficult for you to conceive, but observe, I speak spiritually. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the body is but the instrument or means; the words I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. As though he had said, When I talked to you of eating my flesh, and drinking my blood, I meant that you must receive a spiritual advantage by that sacrifice for you, and that as essentially, as the animal body is nourished by animal food. And when you shall see this body ascend, it will then, by the power of God, be a glorified, or spiritual body; there is nothing impossible in either, but both must actually come to pass, or ye can have no life in you. If I do not give this body for you, and ascend with it into heaven, you will derive nothing from my death and resurrection.

The way being so far cleared to your understanding the true sense in which this holy sacrament is

to be received, and as you have been told why it pleased our Savior Christ to institute this solemn memorial of his death and passion, viz. that every one professing himself to be his *disciple* (that is, a true christian, who is not ashamed of his master) ought to celebrate it constantly, in his own person, at his table; further, as you have been likewise informed, what share of needful knowledge in this great mystery is *sufficient* for you, and that the utmost *reverence* is due to the performance of this ceremony; and lastly, as you have heard that a pure and humble faith is the best preparation, the true wedding garment we are to put on, to be fit and decent partakers of the benefits therein signified to us: let us now proceed to a close examination of what the *second* part of this homily of our church declares upon the subject of the *third* thing necessary in all who would not eat of this bread or drink of this cup *unworthily* (in a dangerous sense) and that is, *newness of life*; and *godliness of conversation*.

That *change* of life, as a sure fruit of faith, is positively required in those that come to this table, we may learn from its relation to the paschal supper, or passover. And should it be here objected by any, *when* can we come safely, since the *first* time we must come with many sins we had not *power before* to conquer? the reply is ready and clear: you will always receive this holy ordinance with *safety*, whenever you come *SINCERELY*, with a hearty *desire* and *purpose* to *correct* your sinful ways; for in truth it is for this one chief *end*, that we are invited to it *at all*; for Christ died, and rose again, on purpose to *restore*, or *amend* our depraved nature; to prepare to himself a people *zealous of good works*, and by this *particular means*, to afford them grace to become his true disciples. And as in the *passover*, no man was admitted to the eating of the paschal lamb, (the type of Christ) but he that was a *Jew*, that was circumcised, that is before prepared, and sanctified

sanctified according to the *commandment*; so in the christian church, the previous qualification of the other sacrament appointed by Christ, is necessary to the communicant at the Lord's table: but to prove that it was not enough to be a Jew *outwardly*, in order to profit by God's holy rites appointed for his people, St. Paul tells us, (1 Cor. x) plainly, that although the people were partakers of the sacraments *in form*, under Moses, yet because some of them were in their hearts *idolators, whoremongers, temples of Christ, murtherers*, and greedy after *evil things*, God overthrew them in the wilderness; and by the same argument, and for our example, we that are Christians should not depend on the mere *name*, but be careful to receive this sacrament with a pure desire to become Christians in deed and in truth, shewing our increase in holiness in consequence of the act; not trusting in the mere *outward* ceremony, and continuing at the same time in ungodly courses, and an uncharitable temper; for this sentence of God will always be justified, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. On this account, as one of the Fathers (St. Basil) observes, it becometh all who come to the table, where the signs of Christ's body and blood are presented, in commemoration of his dying and rising again, not only to be free from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, (that is, not living in a wilful course of actual sin, but purposing to lead a new life) lest they eat and drink to their own condemnation; but it also concerns us to give good proof of our pure remembrance of him who died for our sins, and rose again for our sanctification, by henceforth dying unto sin and the vanities of this world, and living unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Farther, this exhortation includes both the outward testimony, required of us in receiving these signs of Christ's death, and an act of praise, at the same time, to Almighty God, for all his bene-
fits

fits designed for us, through the sufferings, death, and resurrection, of his dearly beloved Son. And to shew that this last-mentioned act of *thanksgiving* ought to form a considerable part of the service, the holy Fathers of the church named it the *eucharistia*, a word that signifies *thanksgiving*: As though they had said, now especially, it is your duty to laud, and praise, and magnify your God, because in this service you are led to consider the true object, cause, beginning, and end, of all religious praise. If you discover any slackness in giving thanks for such mighty mercy, you declare yourselves most ungrateful, and that no other benefit can ever possibly produce in you sincere thanksgiving to God, if you lightly regard so many, such wonderful, and such valuable advantages. Since, then, the name of this holy ordinance, no less than its effects, doth lead us to be most truly thankful for its institution, let us take the Apostle's advice in the xiiith Heb. 10. And *through Christ, let us, therefore, offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* For, as David also saith, in his lth psalm, *He who offereth God thanks and praise he honoreth him.* But, alas, in this instance of our Christian duty particularly, how few thankful persons are to be found, comparatively with the *disobedient* to Christ's call, and mercies here offered, who therefore must be accounted most *unthankful*. And, like as we read in the Gospel, though *ten lepers were healed*, and but one returned to give *thanks* for his cure, so, of those who do communicate, it would be happy if we could find a favorable proportion giving unfeigned thanks; but, in truth, so ungrateful, so forgetful, such proud self-sufficient supplicants are the *best* of us, that we neither consider our own good as we should do, nor do we rightly understand our duty to God: but, above all, we do not humbly confess what we receive at his hands, and what is due from us to
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our Divine Benefactor. Nay, even when consciousness of our own weakness and yilencis, and our bounden service compels us to the need of God's help to enable us to do our duty, it is often so cold and dry a service that we offer up, that our lips may be said to praise him, when our mind and heart are otherwise employed. Our tongues bless, but our lives deny him; our words worship, but our works dishonor him. Let us learn then in future, to render to God such thanks and praise as are due unto his name, and so to declare his exceeding great mercies towards us, that, being cherished in our heart, they may in due season appear in our lives and conversation, to the honor of his holy worship. Now to help forward the newness of life which is so essential a qualification for our constant attendance at the Lord's table, we should pay due regard to what St. Paul lays on this subject: That we, though many, are to be considered in a Christian light, as *one bread and one body*, for *as much as all are partakers of one bread*, that is, are all alike benefited by Christ's body sacrificed for us: whereby he represents, not only our union with Him, but that concord also, in which all who eat at his table should be bound. In other words, it is a public declaration of christian fellowship, for surely none who justly lay claim to that title can encourage *dissention, vain-glory, ambition, strife, envying, contempt, hatred, or malice*, which all tend to DISUNION; whereas all true christians should be as closely joined by the bond of *love and peace*, in one mystical body, as the grains of wheat are ground and blended together in *one loaf*. And in respect to this strong bond of charity, thus formed, the primitive christians called this sacrament the *supper of love*; signifying, that none should come to this feast who were not in christian love with one another, or who bore revenge or malice in their heart, and did not testify their kind affection by

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some charitable relief towards the needy portion of the congregation. This latter practice, indeed, is still retained among ourselves, though in other respects, it is greatly to be feared, we too often fall short of *their* example.

In those early times, and when *yo* used, it was indeed a *heavenly feast*; and holy were the guests who then received it; and so still it might continue, *for Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, to all who sincerely call upon him. But, in *these* times, there is cause to apprehend it is very different with too many. For, it is too notorious to be denied, that, without reconciliation to their offended brethren, without satisfaction to those whom they have wronged, without any compassion or beneficence towards those they might easily relieve; without any concern for slandering, scorning, outward hatred, inward malice, and the practice of many positive breaches of God's laws; nay, while burthened with the hidden enmity of Cain, with the long-covered malice of Esau, and with the secret treachery of Joab, yet men dare to rush into the presence of their Maker, and profane his most awful, and sacred mysteries. And, in truth, how can they be but blind and senseless to all true holiness, who are willing slaves to such pernicious passions? To all such, this caution is perfectly wholesome and necessary, beware of unadvisedly coming without a *better* preparation. The Lord's invitation is to a table of *peace*, come not then with *war* in thine heart; it is a table of *love*, and perhaps thou art contriving *mischief*; it is a table of *concord*, harbour not a spirit of *strife*; it is a table of *pity*, beware thou art not *unmerciful*: But rather, if thou art happily disposed to come where all the christian virtues may be found, where all thy sins may be pardoned, all thy sorrows healed, come with the fear of God the Father, the *provider* of the feast; come with due reverence of
Christ,

Christ, his Son, the *food* and *refreshment* of all who truly seek him, and let the attractive influence of the Holy Spirit of Love draw thee as a well-beloved guest of this heavenly bridegroom. In short, come, though thy conscience accuseth thee of *unworthiness*, if thy *will* is purely desirous of *amending*. As you value your everlasting salvation examine what love you bear for all who are devoted to God, who are true members of Christ, joint heirs with you of an immortal inheritance. Examine whether your regard towards God's image within you, even your own soul, be as sincere as so precious a thing requires. If you have offended any, be reconciled; if you have caused any to go wrong, by departing from God's laws, confess your error, and endeavour to repair the mischief, setting them a better example for the time to come. If you have vexed a brother, henceforth shew him the greatest kindness; if you have injured his character, do him speedy justice; if you have defrauded him, restore his right; if you have cherished spite, let brotherly kindness take place of it; if you have harboured secret malice, let open friendship prove that it is *done away*. In short, be earnest in forwarding thy neighbor's happiness in *all respects*, whether of soul, or body, equally with thine own. All this, you must confess, is nothing more than what we *ought* to do, and in the power of all to *endeavour* to perform, who are determined not to live in wilful error; for if you encourage any unchristian practice or temper of mind, and, regardless of such conduct, come *irreverently* to the Lord's table, you cannot but acknowledge that you thereby provoke the heavy displeasure of the holy Being you thus affront. Lastly, as by this sacrament of christian communion, the utmost peace and purest love is signified to be the character of christians, so *the signs* before us of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross, remind us of his *innocence* and

and his *resignation* to his Father's will in all things. Thereby we are admonished to cleanse our souls from all impurity and wickedness, and to loath and condemn our guilt and wretchedness by nature, lest when we receive the mystical bread (as Origen expresses it) we eat it in an unclean place, that is with a spirit defiled with wilful sin.

If by the law of Moses, that man was to be cut off from the people who eat of the sacrifice of thanksgiving with impurity, can we think that sinner will be excused who *wilfully* profanes the Lord's table? We read in St. Paul's admonition to the Corinthians, what scourges were threatened to *their* church for the *abuse* of this holy ordinance; and it cannot be doubted, but the great neglect and misapplication united of these holy means of growing better, has occasioned many judgments to be inflicted upon christian churches in every age. For this reason, let us all *consider our ways*; let every particular person look to his *own* life and *mend* it. Let us now (though late with many of us) still call ourselves to a *close account*, that we may duly lament our former evil conversation; that we may henceforth *bate* sin as heartily as we have loved it in time past. With earnest sorrow for our manifold offences, let us humbly *confess* them before God, and, with a true heart and steadfast faith, implore the healing balsam of his tender mercy, purchased for us by the blood of his dearly beloved Son. This will purify us from all sin, and close up every wound our iniquities have made.

And now, surely, you must see the necessity of a speedy and earnest *repentance*, as preparatory to receiving this holy sacrament, otherwise we shall eat of this bread and drink of this cup to our certain *condemnation*, instead of *benefit*. It is indispensable, therefore, that we thoroughly *examine*
6 *ourselves*

ourselves whether we repent us truly of our former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life, and to have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and to be in charity with all men. We must not trust to what any other person can say or do for us. We must judge by our own conscience, and not the lives of others, and this must be done with the utmost sincerity, and void of any partiality. O, faith an ancient Father of the church (St. Chrysostom), let no Judas venture to approach this table; let none presume to feast with their Lord while they wilfully purpose to betray him in their heart; let none, while they continue fond of covetousness, imagine they have any interest here; but if any be a disciple, or is desirous of becoming one, let him come without delay, and full of joy and hope, for Christ's words are, *With my DISCIPLES I make my passover*, not with thoughtless, and indifferent guests, much less with wilful sinners.

It was a custom in the primitive church, for the deacon to cry out publicly: If any be holy let him draw near; which words are to be understood in this qualified sense, If any are sincerely desirous of becoming holy, or if any truly repent them of their former sins, and are willing to amend their lives, let all such approach the table of the Lord. Again, the solemnity of celebrating these holy mysteries, is marked by the constant custom of shutting the doors of the church; and, in former times, all public penitents, and those not well acquainted with religion, were forbidden to attend; by which custom it was plainly signified, that no unpurified or sinful guest should be in danger of dishonoring this solemn feast; and to apply a plain comparison: If servants dare not approach an earthly master, while continuing in known trespass, let us beware lest we come, without examining our lives and confessing our sins, to the presence of our heavenly Lord and Master. If that subject would

would deserve reproach, who should even kiss his sovereign's hand with a dirty mouth; shall they escape condemnation who, with *polluted souls*, devoted to *covetousness, fornication, pride, drunkenness*, and all manner of loose and wicked designs, breathe iniquity and falsehood on the bread and cup of the Lord? The most ignorant man alive cannot but understand *this* kind of unworthiness to receive the Lord's supper, nor avoid passing sentence against *such* conduct; but, for the comfort and encouragement of all such as are only *so far unworthy*, as the *sense* of their offences renders them fearful of presuming upon such favor, and consequently *see and feel* the necessity of *growing better*, and humbly *desire so to do*: *such* unworthiness (if it even deserves the name) will never rise up in judgment against them. They know that the very *best* fall short of any thing like *perfection*, and that the only way to obtain grace to *mend*, is to *acknowledge* our *unworthiness of any favor*. Therefore, let none keep away, but those who are determined to be filthy, and wicked still, and may the Lord open *their* eyes speedily, to see *their* danger.

And now, to sum up the instructions afforded you on this important subject in *few words*; you have been informed in what sense you should, and *may* come, reverently, decently, and *safely* to the Lord's table: you have had all necessary knowledge of the thing itself *explained* to you out of God's holy word; and the *fruits* set forth that it is intended to produce. You have seen that you must come with a *steadfast and lively faith*, which is the root or fountain of all *newness of life*, both in giving acceptable praise to God, in working love towards our neighbour, and cleansing our own conscience from all impurity. And if you have attended to this instruction, and will lay it to *heart*, you must own that you cannot *now* think lightly of this duty through ignorance of its *design*; you cannot be at

a loss to comprehend the *principle* which is to render it fruitful. Nor will you be exposed to any plague or punishment from your attendance upon it; because *wilful* sin and *impenitence*, are the only causes of these judgments. And to conclude, by this knowledge, by this faith, and by this sincere obedience, and reformation, you will become so happily united to your Lord and Savior, in the use of his holy ordinance, that *here* you will experience a peace and hope that passeth all understanding; and *hereafter* you will be blessed with the full enjoyment of his Divine Presence, with that eternal and inconceivable bliss and glory, which the righteous Lord hath purchased and prepared for all who love his appearing: To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one true and ever living God, be all praise, honor, and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE XVI.

WHITSUNDAY.

*Upon the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and the many Gifts
thereby conveyed to Mankind.*

JOHN III. 6.

*That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which
is born of the spirit, is spirit.*

BEFORE we enter upon the main subject of this discourse, which is intended to set before you the many and great benefits derived to the church of God, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, procured for it by Jesus Christ, it may be useful to explain to you the origin of this feast, which we call Pentecost, and Whitsuntide. First, then, you must be told, that Easter was that great and solemn feast of the Jews, wherein they celebrated the memorial of their miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, and this feast of Pentecost was always kept the fiftieth day after Easter, in remembrance that the law was given to them on Mount Sinai, at that time. It was not an ordinance of man's invention, but was at first commanded to be kept holy by the mouth of the Lord himself, as we read in Levit. xxiii. 15, 16. *And*

ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete. Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath, shall ye number fifty days, and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord. And the same commandment you will find repeated in the 16th Deut. and 9th verse, and other parts of the law.

After the establishment of the Jews in the land whereunto the Lord had brought them from the wilderness, this feast was appointed to be kept at Jerusalem, where there was usually a great concourse of people from all parts of the world. Of this we are assured from the account in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, wherein mention is made of the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphilia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia, about Cyrene, and strangers from Rome, Jews and Proselytes. And hence we may judge with what grand and awful solemnity this feast was generally held. And as it was commanded to the Jews in the *old law*, so did it receive the confirmation of Christ's sanction in the gospel, by his chusing that very time to appoint, in a manner, a new Pentecost for his disciples; it being on this same day, that the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles and other christians, in the visible form of fiery tongues, when those miraculous powers were conferred upon them, of which we read in the epistle of the day. In perpetual remembrance then, of this astonishing visitation of Christ's power upon his first apostles and followers, the church hath judged it right to keep this day and season *holy*, which we commonly call *Whitsuntide*. It is worthy your observance, that as the law was given to the Jews on mount Sinai, the fiftieth day after Easter, so was the preaching of the Gospel encouraged by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost inspiring the apostles on
mount

mount Sinai exactly fifty days after Easter; Whitsunday being observed with the same respect to that feast, as the Jewish Pentecost was to their Passover. For the account of its original title we have also the testimony of St. Luke in the Acts, who speaketh thus, ch. ii. 1st and following verses, *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord, in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them, cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance.* Now this miraculous sign was undoubtedly intended to represent, both to the apostles and all present, and all succeeding ages, that it is HE (God the Holy Ghost) who giveth eloquence and utterance in preaching the pure gospel of Christ. That it is HE, who inspireth the ministers of God to declare the mighty works which the Lord hath done for the children of men.

By the singular appearance of the *fiery* tongues, we are taught to understand, that it is the same powerful Spirit, who stirreth up that *fervent* zeal, so necessary to promote the word of God, who giveth to all men a tongue, that is, such a hearty disposition for his service, such strength of reasoning, and energy of expression, that they may boldly and cheerfully profess the truth in the face of the whole world, and be able, by the ordinary means of God's grace, (as the apostles of old were, by the more miraculous effects of his immediate inspiration) to be able to withstand, and convince the gainsayers, according to the declaration of the prophet Isaiah (1st. chap. 4th verse). *The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.* And from this divine aid the prophet borroweth his

further consolation in the 7th verse; *That the Lord God will help him, and therefore shall he not be confounded; therefore (saith he) I have set my face like a flint, and I know I shall not be ashamed;* that is, he felt himself superior to all discouragement in the faithful discharge of his office. And it is the same gift that the holy Psalmist desireth in Psalm li. verse 15th, *Open thou my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.* And in every exertion to set forth the pure service of God, we are taught by Christ himself to give God all the glory, and to look up to him for help. For as he says to his disciples (in the xth of Matth. 20th ver.) *It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in you;* so doubtless, it is the good Spirit of God that moveth us to do any thing truly acceptable to him, for of ourselves, without his blessed influence, we must never expect to bring forth saving holiness*. It is the Holy Spirit which must touch the heart, and enlighten the mind, to deal out such instruction as will avail to the reaching the sinner's case; for as the apostle St. James saith, ch. i. 17. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of light.* Now the evidence of holy scripture declares

* Nothing in this assertion affords the least encouragement to ENTHUSIASM. What our Lord here promises to his disciples of *that day*, was an assistance under the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit, for a very particular purpose, in defence of his doctrine in the infant state of the gospel, when his followers were in danger of being daily called upon by the enemies of the christian faith, and when divine assistance was absolutely necessary to support their testimony, and resist the gainsayers. But even now we may receive the same declaration of our Lord, in a qualified sense, with the utmost truth; for though miraculous aid, and intervention, hath long since ceased, and is not to be expected, still it is strictly true, that it is not *we that speak*, in any exertion of professional duty, but the spirit of the Father that still helpeth all our endeavors in our Master's cause, for we speak only from his inspired word, we have no authority but what *that* gives, nor can we expect any success but through the power of *that blessed word*; so that we do not speak, (or preach ourselves,) but *Christ Jesus the Lord.*

sufficiently.

sufficiently, that this miracle of the *tongues* doth signify the preaching of the gospel *with power*, or a bold confession of the faith, by all who have the spirit of God, by which it was established. For as no man can call *Jesus Lord* but by the Holy Ghost, much less can we expect that any man will preach the gospel (that is, *Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God*) without he partaketh of the blessed gift of the same good spirit in a strengthening manner. And as an obvious *proof* of this, if at any time a man professing christianity, should continue silent, for fear of giving offence to unbelievers, or in times of *persecution* for the faith, should relax in his duty, in order to save *himself*, all such, without breach of charity, must be pronounced, as not having the grace, or spirit of God in them, in a degree to be expected, from *sound and faithful* disciples of the Lord, who bought them, and whose *soldiers* and *servants* they uniformly declared themselves to be in the time of peace and safety; since all who will not use their speech in defence of their Master's cause, must be considered as *apostates* from their *profession*.

Having now informed you of what was the original institution of this feast of Pentecost, or Whitsuntide, both among Jews and christians, it is time to proceed to instruct you, in a more particular manner, upon the *nature* and *office* of this Holy Spirit, whose first miraculous influence was communicated to the Apostles as on this day.

By the *Holy Ghost*, we mean a spiritual and divine Being, the third person in the mysterious Trinity in Unity of the Godhead, distinct from the Father and the Son, and yet proceeding from both. The truth of this doctrine is an object of our *faith*, and not of our *understanding*. As far as such a deep mystery can be brought within the compass of man's knowledge, you have it most plainly declared in the creed appointed by our church to be

always read on this day, and for the truth of it, we have many plain testimonies in God's holy word.

First, when Christ was baptised by his forerunner John, in the river Jordan, the Holy Ghost was seen to descend, hovering over him, in the form of a dove (the emblem of *peace* and *innocence*): And a voice was heard out of heaven, with the solemn accompaniment of *thunderings*, pronouncing these words, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*. Which words declare the person *speaking* to be the FATHER, and consequently here is a plain intimation of three distinct persons, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*, which yet are not three Gods, but ONE GOD.

2. Again, when our blessed Lord did institute the sacrament of *baptism*, he sent forth his disciples into the world, commanding them to baptise all nations in the name of the *Father*, and of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Ghost*.

3. In another place he saith, *I will pray the Father, and he will give you ANOTHER COMFORTER*: and again, *when the COMFORTER shall arrive, whom I will send from my Father, He shall lead you into all truth*, which shews that we need his help in an essential degree at *present*, as well as in the infancy of the gospel, since it is impossible to have a saving knowledge of the truth of the inspired word, *without* a degree of that *same spirit*, by whom it was at first *dictated*. These, and such like passages of the New Testament, do so plainly determine the *distinction* of the Holy Spirit from the other persons in the ever blessed Trinity, that it is impossible to deny it, without denying the uniform truth of God's most holy word.

As for the proper *nature* of this blessed Spirit, it is the very same with God the Father, and God the Son, that is to say, spiritual, eternal, uncreated, incomprehensible, and almighty, or in two words, *God and Lord everlasting*. For this reason, he is called the Spirit of the Father, and said to
proceed

proceed from the Father and the Son; and therefore he was equally joined with them in the commission which the apostles received to discharge the work of baptism. But to convince you more effectually of the divine power of the Holy Ghost, it will now be necessary to set before you, the mighty *work* of this ever blessed and eternal Spirit.

First then, it is past all doubt, but that he influenced and directed the hearts of the patriarchs, and prophets of old, by enlightening their minds with the knowledge of the true Messiah, or Saviour of the world, and inspiring them to prophecy, or foretel the things that were to come to pass, long time before they happened. And this St. Peter expressly declares (2 Pet. i. 21.) *The prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Again, St. Luke (chap. i. ver. 67, 68.) thus delivers the account of Zacharias the high priest, *That he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.* And the very same did Simeon, Anna, and Mary, to the astonishment of all who heard them, who could no ways account for the circumstances and manner of their speech. But the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, is in no instance more eminently testified in scripture, than by the conception, and birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In St. Matthew's account of our blessed Lord's incarnation, it is affirmed, that the mother of Jesus was found in a state of pregnancy, and that the formation of the infant was through the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. And the same doth the angel Gabriel expressly declare to the virgin Mary (in the ist of St. Luke and 35th verse) in these words, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Higbest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy person who shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* The manner of
Christ's

Christ's being conceived, and coming in the flesh, is, doubtless, among the *greatest of all miracles*; but nothing is impossible to the spirit and power of God. And this doth most manifestly appear by the inward regeneration, and sanctification of man's corrupt nature, which is brought about by the same divine power. For our Lord himself assures us, in his conversation with Nicodemus (John iii. 5.) that *man must be born again of water and the Spirit*, to qualify him for the kingdom of God.

This appeared so extraordinary a doctrine to man's natural understanding, that the ruler of the Jews, taking it in a *literal* sense, began to *reason* with Christ upon the *impossibility* of such an event taking place, when a man was old. Totally unacquainted with the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, he asks, most simply, *can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* And here we have a very convincing example of the blindness, and ignorance of mere human knowledge, to discover the deep things of God. Nicodemus enquireth with astonishment, *How can these things be?* Whereas, had he been acquainted with *spiritual* things, he would not have disputed the *infinite power of God's most Holy Spirit* in this particular. He would have understood that it is by the invisible operation of the *Holy Ghost* in the mind and heart of man, that his nature becomes regenerate, or made new. He would not have been staggered at Christ's words, but would have been rather led to praise and magnify the *power, wisdom, and goodness* of God. He would readily have perceived that as there are three distinct persons in the Trinity of the Godhead, so they have their respective *offices and operations*.

The office of God the FATHER is to *create*. The work of *redemption* is what distinguishes the infinite mercy and power of God the SON. And to *regenerate and sanctify* mankind (in consequence of Christ's

Christ's merits procuring this power) is the peculiar work of the HOLY GHOST, who proceedeth from the Father, and the Son; in other words, by his influence upon the mind, corrupt and helpless mortals receive such a portion of light and strength to see their danger by nature, and to act so differently from the workings of carnal desire, as to become, in a manner, *new creatures*, according to the apostle's description, (2 Cor. v. 17.) *Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, Old things are done away, behold all things are become new.* Nor are we to doubt of the reality of this miraculous operation, because it is above the comprehension of our *finite understandings*; for we are told, (1 Cor. ii. 14.) *That the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they appear foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned:* but the more they surpass the powers of our apprehension, the more we should adore the secret, and mighty operations of God's Holy Spirit, which can convey such gifts to men, as produce this happy change or improvement of our nature. And our blessed Lord, to remove all vain and perplexing doubts upon the Subject, doth condescend, in his further discourse with the ignorant and unenlightened *master of Israel*, to adapt his spiritual instruction to his shallow capacity; *Marvel not, saith he, (John iii. 7.) that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou bearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit.* Whereby our Savior teaches, that it is not necessary we should understand the *mystery* of the operation, it is enough if we prove the *effects*, by *bringing forth the fruits of the spirit*. Of this we may rest assured, that nothing but the good Spirit of God can give birth to *holy motions* in the souls of men, or incline them to *act agreeably to his will*, and perform the *commandments of the Lord*, to which we must all be very
sensible

sensible we are disinclined from the perverse disposition of our mere carnal nature. The truth of this is confirmed by the unerring words of Christ himself in the text (John iii. vi.). *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* By which the different state of man by nature, and grace, is clearly asserted beyond all possibility of contradiction. The text implies as much as if Christ had said, man, in his own nature, that is, in consequence of his *fallen state*, is become corrupt, and carnal, sinful, and disobedient to God; having defaced the image in which he was created, and extinguished the light bestowed upon him, by the *abuse* of his free will, he could have no spark of that primitive goodness that he once possessed; he had not any virtuous or holy inclination, till the image of his Maker was recovered by the work of *redemption*, till the power of acting agreeably to God's pleasure, was *restored* by the *gift of grace*; therefore whatever charitable or godly motion he feels within him, whatever fruits of faith are produced by him, they can proceed only from the pure regenerating influence of the *Holy Spirit*, who is alone the *sanctifier* of this depraved nature, and the former of a *new creature* in Christ Jesus, so true is it that what is *born of the flesh is flesh; and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* And this truth must be indisputable; for what but the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, could create the different miraculous changes in the state of the following celebrated characters recorded in the scriptures: 1. The youthful David, of an humble shepherd, became, through the help of God's good Spirit, and his strong faith in the Lord, a mighty prince, and holy prophet. As born of the *flesh* indeed, he might have evinced a bold and violent disposition for *war*, but he must have been born of the *Spirit* to relinquish all dependance on his *own* strength, and advance against so formidable

dable an enemy in full reliance upon God's protection. It was evidently through his sure trust in the help of the Almighty that he was enabled to overthrow this powerful adversary. *It was not in sword, or spear, or shield, but in the name of the Lord of hosts, that he confided.* This faith wavered not when he answered the proud Philistine. *This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee, for the BATTLE IS THE LORD'S,* (1 Samuel, xvii. 45, 46.) In the case of St. Matthew likewise, while sitting at the receipt of custom, and till then employed in the most oppressive office, we must acknowledge the miraculous working of the *Holy Spirit*, which at the instant call of Christ, wrought such a *change* in a heart before engrossed by worldly cares, as to cause his *immediate* conversion to so *different a profession*. Of a severe and *haughty* publican, he suddenly became a *lowly* follower of the humble Jesus. Again, the spirit of *faith* was more wonderfully exemplified in the character of St. Peter, than of any of the Apostles, who of a plain man, and unlearned fisherman, became so celebrated for this gift of the Holy Spirit, (whose former influence upon him was manifestly proved, by his *falling off* when left for trial, to his *own mere strength*.) But of all the surprising effects produced by the spirit of the Lord upon mortals, perhaps none surpasses the sudden and astonishing conversion of St. Paul; who, from a cruel, bloody, persecutor, became an humble, faithful saint. Of an *infidel* respecting Jesus, he became the *chief of the Apostles*, to teach his name to distant nations. Surely these are indisputable instances of the power of the *Holy Ghost*, whereby men were regenerated, or in a manner made *new*, or different characters; so as to act totally in contradiction to their former principles. These examples do demonstrate very sufficiently, the difference of acting *according to the flesh*, (after the impulse

pulse of a mere *natural* principle) and from the motive of a superior and more perfect agency.

But the office of the Holy Ghost is not only to effect a *sudden change* in man, (when such is necessary to establish God's glory) but to promote the work of *general reformation*. To this end it is affirmed in scripture, that he in a manner *abideth* in them that are sanctified, and this is clearly proved by the Apostle in his 1. Epist. to the Cor. iii. 16. *Know ye not, (saith he) that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you.* Again in the viith chap. and 19th ver. he repeateth, *What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and that ye are not your own.* And in the viiith Rom. 8th and 9th ver. he maintaineth, that they who live so, as to please God, are not in the flesh but in the spirit; and for this reason, because the spirit of God dwelleth in them, which it cannot be said to do (without blasphemy) in those that are in the flesh, that is, they who are wilfully and habitually devoted to its sinful lusts. And to this doctrine both St. John and St. Peter do fully assent; the former in these words, (1 Ep. iiii chap. 27th ver.) *But the anointing which ye have received of him, (that is, the gift of the Holy Ghost from God through Christ) abideth in you.* And St. Peter asserts the happiness of those who are reproached for the name of Christ, because the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them; that is, they could not endure the reproach, but by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, through whom they are enabled to glorify their Master. Were they in the flesh only, merely governed by its influence, they would resist the reproach, and shew forth a temper of resentment instead of the spirit of meekness and forbearance, which is the true spirit of Christ.

Well then may all true christians rejoice in this blessed succour; in having the spirit of God to help them in their warfare. For if God be with us, (as the Apostle justly saith, Rom. viii. 31.) who

can be against us? And here the grand question obviously recurs, that source of so much subtle controversy, viz. How shall I be assured that the Holy Ghost is with me? There is nothing difficult in the answer. Just as the tree is known by its fruits, so may we determine, where the Holy Ghost has taken possession of the soul. According to St. Paul, the testimony is infallible, for he assures us in Gal. v. 22, 23. *That the fruits of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.* And that no possible mistake may arise from this decision, he specifies in the foregoing verses, the contrary fruits which distinguish the carnally minded men; in other words, the difference of those in the flesh and in the spirit, which are manifestly these, (19th, 20th, 21st verses) *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.* And his conclusion is unavoidable, that as where the fruits of the spirit appear, there the soul is in safe training for eternal glory; so where these last principles prevail, he declares that *they which do* (that is, continue to do) *such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Here then you have a faithful mirror wherein you may view yourselves, and discover, without any possible mistake, whether ye are fit temples of the Holy Ghost. In two words, whether the spirit of God, or the motions of the flesh, do chiefly govern you. Hereby is proved, beyond all the deluding arts of false doctrines, what Christ must do in us, as well as for us, and that by the operation of his holy spirit, and if we cannot shew the pure fruits of that spirit, we are none of his.

Receive this holy doctrine then to your everlasting comfort; you see it is not perplexed by the fond glosses of man's imagination, or partial arguments, but that it is the plain doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, deli-

delivered to you word for word. That if you are conscious your works are *virtuous*, and good, agreeable to the written rule of God's holy word, and actuated by that *pure motive* which is necessary to qualify the *choicest* of all commendable conduct, (that is, flowing from a pure principle of *love* and *duty* to God, and not impelled and governed by the vain spirit of mere *selfish desire*;) then may you be certain you partake of the Holy Spirit, for nothing but his *correcting influence* can promote *such desires*. Whereas to think well of yourselves, without his assistance, is only to *deceive* yourselves. As a fountain cannot from the same place send forth sweet water and bitter, no more can an *unregenerate* heart produce works acceptable to God. The Holy Ghost doth always manifest himself by his *gifts*, which *he bestoweth unto men to profit withal*, whether they be of an *extraordinary*, or *ordinary* description. In former days, he was often manifested by gifts of healing the sick, by prophecy (which is the declaring God's mysteries and future designs,) by discerning spirits, as when the Apostles discovered the secrets of mens hearts; by diversity of tongues, as was instanced at the season we are now celebrating; and by *faith*, to the effecting of other miracles. The former were among his *extraordinary* gifts, and have now *ceased*. But *faith* in believing unto salvation; the gift of the word of wisdom and knowledge, (that is the understanding the scriptures,) and other his ordinary, but no less *essential* and *valuable* graces, still remain, and are the *precious gifts* we all still continually stand in need of.

But as all these gifts are wrought by that one, and the self same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will, so do they wonderfully exalt God's power in the esteem of holy men. Who can read the *bold confession* of the Apostles, before the supreme council of Jerusalem, (who till they were endued with the Holy Ghost discovered such marks of treachery and

and weakness, even to their *living Lord*) and entertain any further doubt of their miraculous *support*? When those who so lately denied their Master, and forsook him, were seen exulting with joy and gladness, that they should be counted worthy to *suffer* for the *name* and *faith* of *Jesus Christ*. And hence the title of *Comforter* is most justly given to the *Holy Spirit* in scripture, because in time of trouble and temptation, it is his office to convey *patience* and *strength of mind*. Is it possible to account, on any *other* principle, for those divine and learned sermons delivered by St. Peter and the other Apostles, whose origin and education were so mean, but that they were inspired with wisdom by the Holy Ghost? How otherwise could they have rendered themselves so *suddenly* and *completely* qualified for *Apostles* and *Teachers*? Doubtless it was his work; who because he doth instruct the hearts of the simple in the true knowledge of God and his holy word, is most justly styled the SPIRIT OF TRUTH.

Time will not allow us now to advance any further proofs of the mighty wonders and effects the Holy Ghost produceth in the hearts and conduct of those who cultivate his gifts and graces. You have already heard some eminent examples of his power, let them suffice for your instruction at present. Before we conclude, however, it may be further profitable to observe, that when our Blessed Lord was leaving the world *to go to his Father*, he *promised his disciples* that he would pray unto the Father to give them another comforter, who should abide with them for ever; even the spirit of truth, who when he was come would guide them into all truth. That this promise was most fully and truly performed, we have the whole testimony of scripture to prove; for as Christ died to reconcile mankind to God, to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, we cannot suppose that the *Comforter* was either promised or given to the Apostles ONLY,

but that his influence was needful to the *universal* or true catholic church through the *whole world*. In truth, unless the Holy Ghost had been always present, by his power, to govern and preserve the church, from the beginning, it would have been impossible it could have stood so long, against the violent assaults and frequent persecutions, and remained to this day so general in its establishment, and so little injured as to the *purity of its faith and practice*. Nothing certainly could have protected it so many ages, and produced the wonderful harvest it has yielded at different periods, and in different nations, but the value of the *divine promise* which Christ has left on record in Matt. xxviii. 20th ver. *Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen.* And the conditions which precede this promised blessing, is no less worthy our observation, that they to whom the care of the church was committed by him, *were to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them.* The undoubted meaning of which promise can do no more than this, that his *grace or power* should ever accompany their faithful services. To be convinced that this blessing was of an *universal nature*, we need only consider our Savior's prayer to God, immediately preceding his being betrayed by Judas. *Neither pray I for them alone, says he, but for them also which SHALL believe in me through their word.* The express words of the intercession do clearly prove, that it was not made for HIMSELF and Apostles only, but for the *whole christian church*. After this plain and genuine declaration of Christ himself, it would be superfluous to produce any *further* proofs but that by the testimony of the Apostles they fully believed the efficacy of this blessing, since in all their discourses they enforce the absolute necessity of the *divine*

divine assistance to qualify and promote their christian labors. For in Rom. viii. 9. St. Paul affirms, *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; for only as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God:* for, says he, *we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, that is, a spirit oppressed with doubt, about our condition, from want of will and power to work out our salvation; but a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind, even the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, that is, whereby we may expect help from above, from him to whom all things are possible, even the unction of the Holy Spirit.* And hence, (adds the Apostle) *The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,* (14th, 15th, 16th verses). Doubtless, by the desire we feel to do his will, and also by the ability we experience to perform it. Thereby then it must be plain to all men, that the influence of the Holy Ghost was not only promised to the Apostles, but also was designed for the whole body of Christ's congregation, although not conveyed in that visible form, and with those miraculous effects, which the confirmation and establishment of the truth required it to be manifested in the Apostles at the feast of Pentecost.

As true christian believers, we cannot but be satisfied that these truths are incontestible, from the evidence of all scripture, and sound experience. All that remains therefore, is for us to give thanks to God the Father, and his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for giving us the promise of this *divine Comforter*, so needful to all our souls; and for confirming it by the signal proof of his appearance upon the first Apostles, as at this season. Let us humbly beseech him to shed abroad his Holy Spirit in all our hearts, that we being regenerate and born anew of water and the Holy Ghost, and by shewing forth the fruits of the Spirit in all sobriety,

goodness, righteousness, and truth, we may in the end be made partakers of everlasting life in his heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

N. B. As the remainder of this Homily treats principally of the errors of popery, it is omitted, as a subject of no *immediate* concern, but as much of the *beginning* of it, as relates to the *general subject*, has been subjoined to the above Discourse.

DIS

DISCOURSE XVIII.

PART FIRST.

*For the Days of Rogation Week.—An Acknowledgment
that every good Thing we enjoy cometh from God.*

General Epistle of St. JAMES i. 16. and part of
17th verse.

*Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift and
every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down
from the Father of lights.*

THE design of this discourse is to raise in our hearts a just and grateful sense of God's unbounded goodness; and from a due consideration of our unworthiness, and the greatness of his condescending mercy, to lead us to adore his mighty name; not only on account of his wonderful creation of the world, and the gracious preservation and providential government of it, (the meditation of which *alone* is sufficient to magnify his power and wisdom, and excite us to *honor, love, and fear* him) but also to instance the more par-

ticular circumstances of his *general bounty* toward mankind, and to extol the manifold private and public benefits we daily receive at his hands, for whose use he both formed the world, and all things in it, and doth continually supply such a liberal store of provisions and comforts to his creatures. Did we but encourage a particle of sterling gratitude for the singular benefits we hourly enjoy, how would thanksgiving every where abound! and the praises of the Almighty become a natural and an universal theme! But the misfortune is, men receive these various blessings, as *things of course*; they in general descend to the level of mere brutal inconsideration, and gratify their appetites by carnal instinct, without a thought of HIM, from whom proceedeth every good gift. Nay, if they *reason* on their happiness, they are too apt to attribute their prosperity to the exertion of their own skill and management, and not to the hand of the great Parent of Nature. Were it otherwise, the memorial of his abundant kindness could not fail to move the warmest affections towards our heavenly Benefactor, and urge us to praise him in *word and deed*, as long as we have our being.

Now a duty which so materially concerns us all to practise, will readily be allowed a proper subject for occasional consideration, and should engage the serious attention it deserves, from all who hear it. One grand means to obtain *benefit* from the present instruction, would be for every one privately to reflect upon the many rich favors they have received in their lives, and their own *unworthiness*. This would greatly assist in promoting a spirit of pure thanksgiving to Almighty God, and bring conviction of his goodness to the mind, in every particular point that may happen to be mentioned at this time; for I need hardly observe, that merely to *bear* of God's great mercy towards us, nay to be *assured* of it, and even to *confess* that every
degree

degree of happiness proceedeth *entirely* from his good will, as the chief source of all things; the *bare knowledge*, I say, of all these truths, will work no essential benefit to us, if we suffer it to reach no farther than our *ears*. For instance, what valuable advantage (in a serious point of view) did the most celebrated sages of antiquity receive from the secret sense of the power and wisdom of the *Most High*, when it did not operate to make them *glorify him in their knowledge as God*? How did it mark their ingratitude and perverseness, when, after the profoundest study of the wonders of creation, they still remained regardless of his goodness, by dishonoring him in their lives? Did not this gross neglect of his most mighty name deserve that blindness in which they were suffered to continue, as likewise God's desertion of them? and, being once forsaken of God, how could they but fall into farther ignorance and error? For though they valued themselves upon their worldly wisdom, and great proficiency in human knowledge, and were the admiration of the age they lived in for depth of skill in various curious arts and sciences; still the imaginations of their hearts passed away like a dream; *professing themselves wise, they became fools*, and perished in their folly.

And this must be the end of all who draw nigh to God in *knowledge*, but depart from him in their *duty*. The fate of such men is so finely drawn from the life, by St. Paul, Rom. i. 18th and following verses, that it is very applicable in this place: *The wrath of God* (says the Apostle) *is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*; and which he clearly explains in the next verse: *because that which might be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewn it to them, by the understanding he hath given them, to discern the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, which are clearly*

seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse; because when they knew God (that is, could not avoid acknowledging his power, wisdom, and goodness by the light he had vouchsafed them) they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, (that is, puffed up with the conceit of their own knowledge); and, as a just punishment, their foolish heart was darkened. The very same sentence is pronounced upon them by the Psalmist, lxxiii. 26th, *For, lo, they who forsake thee shall perish, for thou hast destroyed all them that are strayed from thee.* And the Prophet Jeremiah, in the xviith chapter and 13th verse, declareth the like judgment against them: *O Lord, the Hope of Israel (saith he), all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.* So that you see, it will profit us nought to *bear* only of God's gracious goodness towards his creatures, unless a lively sense thereof affects our *hearts*, so as to bring forth a grateful return of praise, and to honor Him in our *lives*, no less than with our *lips*.

Of this we have a most serious and valuable example in the case of the Jewish nation: they were God's *chosen people*. Who ever heard more of God's wonderous works than they did? Nay, his continual miracles were before their eyes; his law and prophecies were published for their particular government and conviction, and yet the far greater part of them profited not. Why? Because they received him not in their hearts by *faith*. They mistrusted him notwithstanding all his glorious acts; and accordingly such foul and blind ingratitude was the natural cause of their destruction. These things are still on record for our *warning*. Let us avoid the dangerous and unworthy conduct which at length produced the ruin of this once celebrated

lebrated people; for, depend upon it, however we may flourish, as individuals, for the *present*, or as a nation in the general estimate of worldly glory, the decline of *piety* and the increase of *immorality*; in short, the *infidelity* that is so conspicuous from the *lives* of numbers, while their understandings cannot fail to be enlightened by the *truth*; this, if not remedied, will render us, sooner or later, the deserved victims of God's highly provoked vengeance. Let us rather speedily return from the error of our ways, and imitate the wise and humble meditation of the Apostle (Rom. xi. 36.), who, when he duly weighed the wonderful proceedings of God's providence, and his infinite goodness towards the works of his hands, could not refrain this just and pious conclusion; that surely, *of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom therefore be glory for ever. Amen.*

Upon this sound foundation of the Apostle we will now proceed to build such observations as naturally arise from a due consideration of this subject; and, that they may be more easily retained and understood; it may be profitable to divide them into three distinct heads of exhortation.

1. It shall be shewn you, that we can have no good thing but what we receive from *the Father of lights*. This will both excite our *gratitude* and humble our *pride*.

2. That Jesus Christ, his Son and our Lord, is the sole *cause*, or means, through whom we experience the merciful goodness of God in *any shape*. This will contribute farther to lower our pretensions to any exclusive merit. And,

3. It shall be made appear, that by the power and assistance of the Holy Spirit (procured for us by Christ) we are rendered capable of receiving and employing these gifts and graces. This will help to enliven our *hope*, by directing us to the only

only fure fountain whence we may derive essential help.

If these propositions are attended to with the *seriousness* they deserve, they will naturally incline us to pay the utmost reverence to so good and great a Being, and to profess the humblest acknowledgments of his undeserved favor. This is a testimony no grateful heart can possibly refrain. That God, therefore, may bless the work in hand to the establishing his own glory, let us unite in our private petitions to the throne of grace, that he will assist our weak endeavors in so good a cause, and that, through the aid of his most Holy Spirit, and the intercession of our Blessed Redeemer, the salvation of our souls may be promoted by this present instruction.

First, then, do not imagine that we presume to represent to you, with all the *force* and *justice* it deserves, the prodigious power, and matchless wisdom of Almighty God. *Words* cannot reach the description of such excellence; what is incomprehensible by imperfect beings, cannot worthily be related; dust and ashes must not dare to aspire at such a lofty theme. *Fully* to describe what *angels* are content to *wonder* at, exceeds the shallow understanding and unequal power of mortals. It becomes us, therefore, to decline, with an humble consciousness of natural infirmity, to speak upon the unfathomable nature of the *Deity*, for that would expose much rashness, without affording any satisfaction.

More suitable to our dependant state and limited capacity, is it, to *venerate* the awful power we cannot *conceive*, than boldly to lessen his glory, by a curious and vain account of him. What will better profit us, is the subject of his *goodness*: on this all may dwell in *safety*, *delight*, and *certainity*: but DREAD must be the natural consequence of the former contemplation. Unable to reach the dictates of
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of God's consummate wisdom, our weakness might be alarmed in measuring the miserable insignificance of our existence by the scale of his extensive works; we might be depressed in rating ourselves (as we must then appear) *but as the dust of the balance*. But when we meditate on God's infinite mercy, LOVE is the principle that animates our fond inquiries. We are encouraged to trust to such a glorious attribute; *Hope and Comfort* light the way before us, and we pass through all the rugged paths of this uncertain, and imperfect scene, rejoicing, through *faith*, that we have an eternal home; a bountiful, omnipotent, merciful protector, who even vouchsafes to style himself our FATHER, and under that fostering appellation, invites us to our *duty*, even for our own *reward*.

This then is the point of view in which it will benefit us most, to study the ways of God; for considering him as the uncontrollable Lord of the whole universe; as having all things under his subjection; as determining the works we most admire to be impure in his sight, and charging even his angels with folly; as working all things by infinite wisdom, and secret judgment; *as having made all things for himself; yea even the wicked for the day of evil*; and, farther, by reason of the awful perfection of his nature, being called in scripture a *Consuming Fire*, a terrible and fearful God. With respect, I say, to all these characters, such unprofitable worms are the very *best* of men, that they must draw in their heads, and tremble to approach Him. But, in gracious consideration of our weak, and helpless state, he shews himself at present to us, in the lovely character I have so faintly drawn above. He strengtheneth us to lay aside our *fears*, and build our trust in his encouraging promises. For what but goodness infinite, could prevail on the dread Lord of heaven and earth to take delight to dwell with the children of men?

men? What but his GOODNESS could incline him to invite us to him? to tempt us with his friendship, and his presence? What but his *goodness* could cause his patience with us, when we have erred and strayed from his righteous ways? What else, could move his tender long suffering with our gross perverseness? and engage his calls to us, his *repeated* calls to turn unto him? and his wondrous methods of leading us to repentance? Surely to his *goodness* only, do we owe our being made reasonable creatures, instead of senseless animals. Is it not his rich mercy, that we are born under the light of the gospel, whereby we have the blessed *opportunity* of greater salvation, than if we had lived in heathen ignorance and blindness? and may we not well exclaim with the Apostle (Hebrews ii. 3.) *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* In short, what but the singular goodness of our heavenly Father, God blessed for evermore, could afford such innumerable ways of preserving us from the dominion of sin in this world, and death eternal in the next? And all this without the least desert on *our* part, but solely to magnify his mercy in our *redemption*.

Were it possible we could hear the united praises of the heavenly choir of glorified spirits, and were they required to answer to *their* experience of God's goodness, whether their happiness depended on their Maker's mercy or themselves, doubtless, with one voice, they would reply, in the inspired language of the cth Psalm, *Be ye sure that the Lord He is God, it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.* And where they asked again, To *whom* they were indebted for their regeneration, inward holiness, and salvation, whether their own merits, or God's unbounded goodness, advanced them to their present state of peace and bliss; although each in person, might extol the mercy of the Almighty for *themselves*, yet let
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the holy David again declare the truth, in whose words they could not fail to say, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise, for thy loving mercy and truth's sake.* And if they were yet further questioned, from what source they derived the power to perform the glorious acts of holy worship, which marked their earthly fame, and whereby God was so highly pleased and glorified; as we cannot avail ourselves in *this* life of their just confessions on the subject, we must have recourse to *other* witnesses to resolve it, that by the mouth of two or three, the truth may be collected.

Let us attend then, to what both Prophets and Apostles testify throughout their writings, on this subject: *O Lord, (saith the holy prophet Isaiah, xxvi. 12.) thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.* And St. Paul's confession (in the 2d Epist. Cor. iii. 4, 5.) agrees exactly with the above: *Such trust have we through Christ to Godward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* Nor can it possibly be otherwise, because, *in him we live, and move, and have our being.* If, then, the testimony of holy men on earth, unites to confirm the confession of the saints above, there needs no other proof to shew, that every virtuous principle of the Lord, must necessarily proceed from God's good spirit.

Now, if it is just and safe to believe that spiritual graces are entirely the *gift of God*, why should we attribute the blessings of nature, or fortune, (as we call it) to any other cause? If God is the Creator of body and soul; can the improvements of the *latter* belong less to his power, than the *former*? for, in fact, since the body becomes more virtuous, holy, and perfect, in proportion as the mind or soul is endued with *light* and *strength*; so if those good qualities can be derived but from God *alone*,
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not a shadow of argument can be advanced to separate the *effect* from its *cause*. If God is sufficient to the *greater* work, he must be equal to the *lesser*. Surely it is a more marvellous act to justify a sinner, and to new create him in righteousness, (saith one of the ancient fathers *) than to new form the heaven and the earth, therefore we must conclude (upon sound religious principles) that whatsoever benefits we receive of *grace*, of *nature*, or of *fortune*, come *all* from God *alone*, as the sovereign source of every thing that is good.

To imagine that the Almighty, after having made the world, immediately deserted it to the controul of a fallen, imperfect race, that had lost their original clear principle of acting, and of judging right, is to believe against the clear light of scripture, and common sense; the contrary is the happy *truth*, or far more miserable would be our situation *here*. The hearts of men are under God's rule and governance. He humbleth the proud, and exalteth the meek, or oppression and wretchedness would quite overwhelm the earth. He also governeth the world by his goodness; and directeth its moral course, no less than the order of the seasons. Without the supreme direction of his continual power and wisdom, this outward ball could not have so long remained in undiminished beauty; nor would such eminent instances of moral virtue, and christian excellence, have been exhibited in every age and nation. It is HE, as St. Paul affirms, Heb. i. 3. *Who upholdeth all things, by the word of his power*; without which influence they would fall again into their original confusion. It is by the prevailing virtue of goodness infinite, that every creature is preserved in the order of its creation. Though invisible to mortal eye, He filleth heaven and earth with his presence. By his

* St. Augustin.

command over nature, he causeth the separate qualities of heat, and cold, and moisture; by which the fruits and flowers of the earth are generated and perfected. He giveth life to the heart of man. Without his sovereign fiat, neither nourishment would supply strength to our *bodies*, nor medicines health. For as our Lord assures us, *Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*, that is, his omnipotent, unerring will is the cause that every thing doth yield its *due effect*. In like manner Solomon declareth, in the book of Wisdom, xvi. 12. *That it is neither herb, nor mollifying plaister, that of themselves give health, but thy word, O Lord, which bealeth all things*. In short, it is not any independant power in the creature that worketh these effects, but the goodness of the Most High that supplieth all their virtues; for by the word of his mouth do all things exist. Thus St. Peter asserts, 2d epist. iii. 5. *As by the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth were made, so by the same word are they kept in store until he withdraw his power, that is, when it shall be his will to destroy them*.

If the goodness and power of God did not manifest themselves in the government of his work; if he did not rule the raging of the sea; had he not appointed it bounds, that it cannot pass, long since would it have swallowed up the earth, as by its own force we see it is inclined, in many instances, where his providential judgments have permitted it to *exceed* its limits; but he hath said, *hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther*, for both winds and sea obey his voice. But for the preserving power of his hand, the jarring discord of the elements would quickly have involved in ruin the whole face of nature; whereas, through the gracious care of the Almighty, such harmony is maintained among them, and their effects restrained to
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so many desirable ends, that even the most boisterous elements contribute, under his wise directions, to the health and happiness of mankind. What but the power of him who made the sun to rule the day, *and which ariseth according to his word, and knoweth its going down,* could prevent the fire of that vast body from endangering continual destruction to the globe we live in? yet is its heat so tempered by the gradual return of the seasons, and so manifest is God's goodness in measuring its influence towards the several parts of the creation, that it bestows no more than such *due degrees* of genial warmth, as are necessary to produce, and ripen, the various fruits of the earth, as formed for their peculiar climates.

Consider again, the great ball which we inhabit; what but the controuling word of the *Almighty* could determine and direct its regular course, through so many ages of time? whose size is so marvellously proportioned to its motion, that we are not sensible thereof from its daily revolution. Well may we exclaim, with holy Job, *Who hath understanding to discover where the foundations thereof are fastened?* And so true is the Psalmist's sublime expression on this subject, *He laid the foundations of the earth that it never should be moved at any time.* Ps. civ. 5. by which he means that it should never depart from its appointed course. Again, if we consider the furious beasts of the forest, and the huge fishes in the waters, to what can we ascribe their little power to general mischief, nay the disposition of many of the *former* to subjection, but God's goodness to mankind, who hath given us understanding to obtain dominion over far more powerful creatures than ourselves, and to convert their mighty strength to the purpose of use and pleasure? For who, as Job again observes, *inspireth understanding but the Almighty?* xxxii. 8. In truth, what have we that we have not received? or who

can boast of wisdom, or knowledge, or strength, but what cometh from the Lord? For man did not make himself, and from whom could he derive the power of thought, but the giver of every good gift? Hear the judgment and confession of the wisest of men, who ascribeth the glory where alone it is due: *God hath granted me* (says Solomon) *with Wisdom, ver. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 to speak as I would, and to conceive as is meet, for the things that are given me: because it is he that leadeth unto wisdom and directeth the wise, for in his hand are both we and our words: all wisdom also, and knowledge of workmanship, for he hath given me certain knowledge of the things that are, viz. to know how the world was made and the operation of the elements. The beginning and ending, and midst of the times: the alteration of the turning of the sun, and the change of the seasons, the circuits of years, and the position of the stars. The natures of living creatures, and the furies of wild beasts: the violence of winds, and the reasonings of men: the diversities of plants, and the virtues of roots. Finally, He concludes all wisdom to be the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: So abundant is God's goodness in his dealings with men, which mercy demandeth the constant gratitude, and devotion of our hearts. And if it is hard for mortal man to guess aright at things that are upon earth, and that with labour he findeth out the things that be before him, who is equal to search out the things that are in heaven? For what man is he that can know the counsel of God, except He give wisdom, and send his Holy Spirit from above? for the thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain. Wisdom ix. For from whence can man derive understanding but from the Most High? If, then, the wisest of the sons of men makes this confession, why should we hesitate one moment to acknowledge it? Let the full conviction, therefore, of this essential truth, lead us all to discharge the*

grateful duty due to so much undeserved goodness. Thus much will be sufficient for our improvement at this time, upon this most excellent and important subject of the universal bounty, and power of the Almighty. The order and beauty, the comforts and delights flowing from all God's works, pronounce the Author to be *omnipotent*, goodness infinite and exalt the admiration and praises of both heaven and earth. But there remains a still more interesting part of the subject to be considered, and that is a due acknowledgement of the wondrous love of our *blessed Redeemer*, who is the sole cause of any mercy being shewn us; and also the still further goodness of God, in granting us the good spirit of *his grace*, by whose assistance only we are rendered capable of converting every good gift to God's glory, and our final happiness, of course. The account of which astonishing mercy will be fully set forth in the following discourse. For the present, let us humbly offer up our thanks to God for all his goodness towards us undeserving creatures, by the most grateful acknowledgments, that to Him belongeth all praise, and honour, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

And thus much for the first part of our discourse. It is now to be considered, what is the manner of that mercy which is shewn to us, and how it is to be improved. For the first part, we have seen that the mercy of God is shewn to us in that he hath given us his Son, who hath redeemed us from all unrighteousness, and purged unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And for the second part, we have seen that the mercy of God is shewn to us in that he hath given us his Spirit, who is the earnest of our inheritance, and the seal of our redemption. And thus much for the second part of our discourse. It is now to be considered, what is the manner of that mercy which is shewn to us, and how it is to be improved. For the first part, we have seen that the mercy of God is shewn to us in that he hath given us his Son, who hath redeemed us from all unrighteousness, and purged unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And for the second part, we have seen that the mercy of God is shewn to us in that he hath given us his Spirit, who is the earnest of our inheritance, and the seal of our redemption.

DISCOURSE XIX.

PART SECOND.

*Of the Homily for Rogation Week.—On the universal
Goodness of God.*

JAMES i. 16, and part of 17th.

*Do not err, my beloved breibren, every good gift, and
every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down
from the Father of lights.*

THE last discourse upon these words contained
a variety of particulars, serving to demon-
strate the great goodness of Almighty God towards
us his undeserving creatures, both as it is mani-
fested by his creation of the world itself, and in the
production of all the good things it contains; and
which supply so many comforts and conveniencies
to mankind. The design of this general display of
our Maker's bounty, was to move our gratitude,
and becoming obedience towards so gracious a Be-
nefactor. When the heart is touched with a proper
sense of its continual, and unspeakable obligations
to God, as the idol by which they are signified, they

to the Divine Being, the serious consideration of the several articles before specified, and illustrated, and by which God's power and goodness are so visibly established, cannot fail to raise a secret acknowledgment of pious praise to the merciful Author of such loving-kindness.

Now concerning the true spirit of this doctrine, people are unhappily *divided*; for there are many, who though they will allow, that every improvement of the soul, that is, every thing relative to virtuous conduct, and even every advantage of *bodily constitution*, doth proceed from God's power and goodness; and from no other principle, (because there can be no source of goodness but God himself) yet, *respecting* the things that are without, that is, those various benefits and enjoyments, which we commonly distinguish by the names of *fortune*, as wealth, authority, preferment, and all worldly honors and successes; these they imagine are principally the consequence of men's own industry and wise management, and not the effect of a superior, and all-directing Providence. Now of this we may be assured, that all such notions are extremely *false*, and actually grounded upon *heathenish principles*. For, is it not consistent with the soundest reason, to admit that whatever advantages may proceed from the exertions of man's labor and diligence, as a *secondary* means of producing a natural effect, are still most justly to be ascribed to God, as the *original Author* of these several powers in man? since the very *wisdom*, and *abilities*, which are positively necessary to accomplish these purposes, cannot possibly be derived from any *other cause* but the universal Parent; therefore not to give the glory where alone it is due, is to encourage an opinion as fabulous as that of the heathen poets and philosophers, who vainly fancied fortune to be a goddess, and being as blind *themselves*, as the idol by which they represented her, they

they worshipped her as the disposer of prosperous events. Now had they been acquainted with God's true word, they would have perceived (as all his faithful servants must) that his works and dealings with the sons of men, are therein most manifestly related. As christians, therefore, we must be cautious not to lean to the wild belief of Pagans, or to corrupt ourselves by trusting to their ignorant opinions, and vain imaginations. Such persons judge according to Job's description of God's ways, xxii. 13, 14. *who say, how doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not.* But very different are the Psalmist's sentiments of God's universal presence, and infinite knowledge. In his humble confession, the Spirit of God dispelleth the darkness of man's degenerated understanding, and who can resist conversion to the truth, when he meditates upon the sublime and affecting language of the cxxxixth Psalm: *O Lord, Thou hast searched me out, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting, and mine up-rising. Thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways. For so, there is not one word in my tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether. Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me: I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, and whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I climb up to heaven Thou art there, if I go down to hell Thou art also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned into day; yea the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day. The darkness and light to Thee are both alike.*

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Very different you see are these sentiments of an enlightened servant of the true God, from the dark and foolish persuasions of heathen dreamers, who idly imagine that God walketh in the circuit of heaven, and taketh no notice of the affairs of this lower world; who suppose all things are the effect of chance or accident; or in other words, disposed of by the still less probable agency of fortune; and that God's providence has no direction of sublimary events. To what doth such imaginations lead but to the false decision related by the Psalmist xiv. *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.* Against all such, the reproof of God's own words, as recorded by the same inspired writer, will be sufficient. *Hear O my people, and I will speak for I am God, even thy God.* For all the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. *I know all the fowls upon the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are in my sight, for the whole world is mine, and all that is therein.* Again in the xcixth Psalm 1st verse. *The Lord is king be the people never so impatient, he sitteth between the cherubim be the earth never so inquiet.* And further, what a strong conviction of God's universal rule is conveyed to us in this lofty declaration in the prophet Jeremiah, xxiii chap. 23d ver. *Am I a God at hand saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Almighty?* And to close the scriptural testimony on this head, let us attend to that forcible comparison of Christ himself, in support of the divine omniscience and superintendancy over all his works, *That not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your heavenly Father.* Nay, when we consider that events of the greatest consequence in the progress of worldly concerns, have proceeded from seemingly the most trifling causes, it helps to illustrate the truth of God's direction in the effects
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produced by these means. And in truth, it is a reflection upon man's understanding, to put these questions, which is most worthy credit, that fortune, an imaginary being, who is ever painted blind, and allowed most fickle in her dealings, should determine mens different situations with propriety, on that God, by whose power alone all things were made, who is the truth and the light, should be the director of his own creation? who at one view beholdeth the beginning, middle, progress, and end of every thing in heaven and earth; who knoweth the secrets of mens hearts, and without whose good pleasure no creature could exist one moment. The truth then is, that riches, wisdom, power, health, honors, and success, do all proceed from God's divine direction; and of which no mortal could partake, but by the appointment of his bountiful purpose. This God ordains for the test of mens virtue, and for the ultimate glory of his own wise government. And by these providential trials of his creatures, in the various situations in which they may prove instrumental both to God's designs and their own happiness, we discover the truth of David's testimony concerning the source of all worldly good, as expressed in the civth Psalm, 28, 29 ver. *When thou givest it them they gather it; and when thou openest thy hand they are filled with good: but when thou hidest thy face they are troubled.* To the truth of which doctrine Solomon also subscribeth, (xth Prov. 22.) where he saith, *that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich.* And it is a grateful and just confession that we find in the favored Hannah's song, 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8. *The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low, and lifteth up: he raiseth up the needy out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory, for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them.*

The truth of God's universal power and goodness having been abundantly established, from the testimony of holy scripture, we will now proceed to consider the use of this doctrine for the improvement of our *hearts*. And this cannot fail being very evident; for as we must be persuaded that every good gift, both of nature and grace, depends upon the will of Almighty God, it naturally will incline us to apply to him for favor, and also strengthen our faith in his power and promises. It is likewise very profitable to our souls on this account, since the confession of this truth disposes us to gratitude towards the gracious author of all our happiness. And lastly, by the encouragement of this dependence, our *pride* becomes *humbled*; since we are thereby convinced that we have nothing we can strictly call our own, but weakness and wickedness. And if happily we advance in the cultivation of any goodness, as we must be sensible that we have nothing but what we have received, we gladly ascribe the glory where alone it is due, and according to the prophet Jeremiah's exhortation, (ixth chap. 23d and following verses) acknowledge with all lowliness of heart, *That it is not for the wisest man to glory in his own wisdom, nor for the mighty man to glory in his might, nor the rich man to glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, (saith the Lord), and that I am his God who exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness upon the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

Again, a due sense of this truth will prevent our overvaluing ourselves above our neighbour, or undervaluing of his condition, because he is not distinguished by many or mighty gifts and blessings; since being assured, that every good and perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of lights; this will check all uncharitable and contemptuous conduct towards others, knowing that the Lord dis-

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poseth as he seeth best. For if we are inclined to shew a different behaviour, and to boast a preference founded upon our *seeming advantages*, the rebuke of the Apostle is at hand, to check the approach of spiritual pride, by this most wholesome and humbling question, 1 Cor. iv. 7. *For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?*—Therefore however rich or good we may happily find ourselves, we are hereby taught to shew becoming gratitude and meekness. And if we consider further, that God cannot only exalt the humble to still higher posts than we enjoy, but likewise of the lowest ranks of men can produce the brightest saints and servants, it supplies a valuable lesson against *self-sufficiency* of every kind; since promotion cometh neither from *the east nor the west*, and our utmost endeavours, without God's permission, are all in vain. And if the sinner is disposed to close with the gracious means of turning from the error of his ways, God's grace can effectually work the most blessed changes in the most corrupted heart. These reflections afford no cause to glory, but in God's impartial goodness to the sons of men, according to his own encouraging declaration, *Who-soever offereth me thanks and praises he honoreth me.* And the doctrine which the text doth further suggest to us, proves likewise, that it is the highest act of wisdom to confess that the whole world is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. It also consequently directs us to whom we may most surely apply, to obtain the good things we stand in need of, according to the counsel of St. James, ch. i. 5th ver. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraides not, and it shall be given him.* Happy would it be for us, if we did but attend to this exhortation of the Apostle; if we did but follow the example of Solomon, who de-

declares it to be a point of wisdom even to know from whence this rich gift cometh; for he assures in Wisdom 6th, That though a man be never so perfect among the children of men, yet if Gods wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded. And he confelleth further in the 17th and 18th verses, That none can know the counsell, or will of God, except he give wisdom and send his holy spirit from above, for so the ways of them that lived on the earth were reformed, and men were taught the things that were pleasing to God; and were saved through wisdom. And this wisdom he talks of, is only another word for religious dependance upon God: for the fear of the Lord he elsewhere declareth to be the beginning of wisdom, and that a good understanding have all they that act according to it.

It is doubtless for want of faith in the divine government of all things, that many are beguiled to have recourse to foolish charms to cure the ailments of their bodies; and having no sound foundation of religious principles to direct them, are weak enough to trust to impostors and delusions, which disgrace both the christian and even the rational character. Whereas the happy consequence of owning God to be the supreme cause of all the good we receive, is a diligent use of the gracious means his providence has appointed, and an humble resignation as to the event.

Now if this pious dependance did but influence the enterprising merchant, and those who are most eager after worldly gain, they would be satisfied with that degree of success Gods blessing is calculated to procure upon the means directed by truth and justice only; they would have recourse to no unworthy or dishonest arts to hasten or increase their fortunes: for however harsh the expression may appear, it is yet most true, that riches obtained by immoral and exceptionable practices, are rather the gift of the evil than of the good spirit; since such

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ways being expressly contrary to God's laws; they can be placed to no proper account but the subtle suggestions and enluring temptations of our greatest enemy. We may compare all those who thus enrich themselves, to the scriptural definition of the *tan's* servants, who fall down and worship him through an ungovernable thirst of temporal honors or worldly wealth, without any regard to the purity of the measure employed to get them. Surely, all who are indifferent about their conduct in this respect, may fairly be said to be indifferent to the precepts of the Almighty. To forsake nor to despise his laws, amounts to the same crime; for we *have not serve God and Mammon*; and not to keep his commandments, he declares himself *is not to love him*; and as it is utterly impossible that God can immediately bless that opulence which is produced through fraud, oppression, perjury, extortion, or any other unjust contrivance, so we continually see a curse attends it sooner or later; and though it may not always be so conspicuous in the *first*, or *second* generation, through the false estimate men make of happiness, and the ignorance of what passes in the wounded conscience, (or that it may not be felt so poignantly in consequence of an *awakened* state of mind) yet these sins are often visited unto the *third and fourth* generation of those who tread in the iniquitous courses of their forefathers.

To renounce the dictates of truth and righteousness, is to yield to the will of the tempter. But can any man who is disposed to love the Lord with all his heart, and believes that he is the provider of every good and necessary gift, be ever prevailed upon to pursue such courses for the enjoyment of any comforts whatsoever, that are inconsistent with *christian duty*. A competency produced by honest means, nay a state of suffering, attended by submission to God's will, and dependance on his mercy, is infinitely preferable to all the wealth of India,

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without peace of mind. For example: no man who hath a due and humble faith in God's goodness towards all his creatures, will ever *steal* to supply his wants. No woman would ever sacrifice her chastity for the sake of *gain*; who believes that God will never desert those who respect the *purity* of his laws. If therefore we truly believe that God is the author of life, health, and prosperity, we shall be led to apply to the fountain of all good for the necessary supplies of all these blessings; and the just consideration of this same truth, will consequently incline us to remember the *account* we must give *hereafter*, for the use or abuse of these good gifts. It will urge us to greater diligence in employing our various talents to the honor of God, and the benefit of our fellow creatures; so that finally, we may experience the blessed welcome of *Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*; for in that *thou hast been faithful in the few things* entrusted to thy care during thy state of trial, thou shalt be ruler over many things in a state of retribution.

There is likewise another most valuable effect derived from cultivating this faith in God's being the disposer of every good gift, since this confidence inspires us with silent submission and godly patience, in case it should prove to be his pleasure to deprive us of our present comforts. For as in bounteous mercy he doth provide the greatest blessings, for the purpose of our religious use of them; so doth he sometimes as wisely *take them from us*, to try the resignation of our will to his decrees; to exercise our faith in *him*; to correct our *self-love*; to wean us from this world, and to teach us by their partial losses, to be more careful in future of using those which *remain* to the proper ends for which they are graciously *continued* to us: and to consult *his glory* in our conduct, more than the bare gratification of our own *fond and vain* desires.

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But alas! if we look into the world, how different is the general practice of mankind from this pure and salutary faith! Many, it is true, confess with their lips, that God is *the author of every good and perfect gift*; but in the day of trial, they do not prove the sincerity of their profession. This none will deny, who have made any observation on themselves or others. For example, only try it in the following cases: if the rich and prosperous man is overtaken by *misfortunes*; if he has lost his property or estate, how seldom does he bear his visitation with humble submission to the unerring hand that directeth all things, and trust that it can largely repair the loss, by future favors of a better kind? Instead of the patient conduct of the pious Job, who blessed the Holy Name that hath *given and taken away*, we shall find him grieving with vexatious discontent, repining at the severity of his fate, and desponding through distrust of any possible remedy or recompence. Even among those who have had the grace to obtain a *good name*, which is *above riches*, and who have a witness in themselves of a good conscience that may always afford sure comfort, yet how many want fortitude to defy the voice of slander, when attacked; how ready are they to discover the weakness of their nature, by proud disquietude or passionate revenge? What generally is more exasperating, even to a mind endowed with wisdom and knowledge, (which should render us superior to the scoffs of ignorance) than the detection of being over-reached, or the suspicion of incapacity to prevent it? Now if in all these instances, men retained a thorough sense that every good and perfect gift came from above, they would be satisfied with God's withdrawing the benefits he freely bestowed upon them, whenever it seemed good to his unerring wisdom to do so. But the arguments they employ to defend their discontent, affords still further conviction of their *insincerity*.

For when men say they would be content to suffer losses, if from the hand of God alone; but that the aggravation of their misfortunes proceeds from sudden and grievous accidents, such as oppressive treatment, or treacherous and ungrateful friends, and that (as) excites their murmuring; what, I say, doth this prove, but their ignorance or misbelief of God's mode of governing the world? For as God being invisible to human light, can only be discovered in his works; and as the usual method of his ordering events, is through the agency of secondary causes, so it is an article of sound faith to believe that all things are ultimately converted by his infinite wisdom and goodness, to the purposes of his own glory. Not that any the least degree of wickedness is at all necessary to magnify his name; for thus perfection would not be the character of his dwelling place, Eccles. xv. 11, 12, and following verses. For God hath no need of the sinful man, nor can any say it was through the Lord that he fell away, for he ought not to do what God hateth; for he commandeth no man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any man licence to sin (20). but as the wisdom of the Lord is great, as he is mighty in power and beholdeth all things, so according to the order of his providence, in this imperfect state, he employeth the suited instruments of good and evil for trial, correction, or reward. And thus Solomon observes in another place, (Wisdom xvi. 24.) That the creature serveth him who is the Maker, increasing his strength against the unrighteous for their punishment, and abateth his strength for the benefit of them that put their trust in God. Pure and impure spirits, good and bad men, are subject to his controul. Fire and hail-stones, and vapors, wind and storm fulfil his word, Psalm cxviii. 8. Therefore by whatsoever means we are deprived of those good things, God may have been pleased once to bestow upon us, we must strive to imitate the example of holy

Job,

Job, who, though his cattle were driven away by his enemies; though his dear children were destroyed, and his own body afflicted by the malicious power of the devil: yet still he acknowledges the sovereign power of God in all that came upon him. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* Thus was this faithful servant purified, and here is a lesson of becoming resignation to the rich, and prosperous, that are humbled by calamity. And as to forbearance, under the trial of slanderous reports, the conduct of the prophet David affords a no less remarkable instance of christian fortitude and meekness; as related in 2 Sam. xvi. 12. For we read that when Shimei cursed David in the foulest language, and one of the king's attendants would have taken due vengeance on his head; the king made no impatient answer against his enemy, but only thus appealed to God in the moment of provocation: *It may be the Lord will look upon my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.* From these examples we conclude, that though the instrument of a wicked action is led thereto from private malice, and the malignity of his own disposition, yet since God may permit such injuries to befall us in this present life through these means, either for trial of our dependance on his help, or to render us more perfect than if not thus tried; it is more becoming christians, to submit with patience to the scourges, (which when it hath produced the desired effect of salutary correction, will be consigned to the proper place of every thing that is worthless in itself) than by violent opposition to endeavour to avenge ourselves; since God has declared, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* Trusting in God then, for our support under the bitterest provocations, it is far more profitable to beg that grace which David so nobly instanced, when he swore to his enemy in his power, *Thou shalt not die,* 2 Sam. xix. 23.

Let us pray and strive therefore to imitate these memorable examples of submission, and trust in God. Let us confess every kind of good gift to be so entirely dependent on the will of God, that we may be always resigned to his management of our affairs; however unpleasant, or unpromising, the immediate issue may appear to our present narrow sighted judgment. Let it be the study of our whole lives, to establish this truth in our hearts, that not only the good things of this corruptible state, but every christian grace or virtue, every the *most perfect gift proceedeth from the Father of lights*. That without his gracious influence upon the mind, no man can possess a saving faith of this truth, or continue in it; and this will be made more fully evident in the next discourse. In the mean time may the truths already advanced make lasting impressions upon us, and operate through God's blessing, to the profitable conviction of our understanding, and the improvement of our lives. That we may be finally prepared for the blessing promised by our Lord and Savior: *Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it*; Amen; for the sake of Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. To whom, &c.

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DISCOURSE XX.

Third Part of the Homily on the same Subject.

**General Epistle of St. JAMES i. 16. and part of
17th verse.**

*Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift and
every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down
from the Father of lights.*

IN the first of the two foregoing discourses upon these words, the truth of God's universal goodness towards mankind, was established by arguments supported on scripture authority; whence it was shewn, that it is *to that only* that we are indebted for every good thing we receive and enjoy. In the second sermon on this subject, the confirmation of the necessity and usefulness of *maintaining* such a doctrine, was further enforced. In the management of these points, the instruction they were intended to convey was chiefly confined to the *outward goods* of this world, as *riches, health, and power*; and the respective comforts flowing from these gifts. — It is time now to proceed to the consideration of the *remaining* part of the subject, as proposed to be examined in its proper place.

First then, it will be profitable to shew, that not only every good gift of this corruptible state depends upon God's wise and merciful disposal, but that, more especially, every *spiritual grace* and gift is derived from the same endless source of every perfection. *Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights.*

Secondly, That *Jesus Christ*, God's Son and our Lord, is the sole cause, or mean, through whom we experience the merciful goodness of God in any shape; and,

Thirdly, That it is by the power and assistance of the Holy Spirit (procured for us by Christ) that we are rendered *capable* of receiving or employing these gifts and graces. These you may remember were the original divisions of the subject.

Now as the foundation of all religious confidence is FAITH, for, *without this* (says the Apostle) Heb. xi. 6. *it is impossible to please God; because he who cometh to him must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Let us, therefore, consider, how this principle is *applicable* for the confirming of the truth of the matter before us. Now as this appears, by the Apostle's reasoning, to be the very first introduction to the christian life, we will examine what has been affirmed in scripture concerning this first of all the spiritual graces (the gift of faith) and whence only we can obtain it.

Nothing can be more express than the sentiment of St. Paul concerning this gift: *For by grace* (says he) *ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* He here most plainly asserts our own *insufficiency* to produce such a quality, and as positively declares from *whom only* it proceeds. And, as every man's own experience must convince him of the truth of this, from the natural inclination of the human heart to *unbelief*,

all that remains on our part is sincerely and incessantly to ask this gift. St. Peter also, in terms as little liable to be mistaken, assures us (1 Ep. i. 5.) *that we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*; and in the 9th verse, *that the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls*. As, therefore, this christian virtue is essential to the growth of all the others, and can only flow from the pure fountain of God's will, it must doubtless be attributed to his *goodness*, that we are thereby endowed with strength to prevent our *wavering* in the hope that is set before us. Now as no christian will dare to deny this *truth*, viz. that *without God's help we can do nothing* acceptable to him; that is, in other words, that *there is none that doth good no not one*, upon principles of a carnal and depraved nature. Nay, that the very *best*, must own occasional propensity to evil desires (owing to the noxious seeds of pride, envy, revenge, and inordinate self-love that ruffle the temper, and pollute the soul); consequently, if ever we feel inclined to cherish perfect charity towards mankind, to what possibly can we attribute the growth of this rare virtue, but to the influence of God's grace upon the heart.

If, through the weakness of our nature, we are liable to continual transgression, to what shall we ascribe the grace of *sincere repentance*, working actual *reformation*, but to the hand of mercy, that holds us up by the power of this grace from falling past recovery? How should a creature, whose will is *corrupt*, discover any inclination towards good, unless the Author of all goodness had corrected its disordered state, and in a degree *reformed the will*? This then, likewise, must be the gift of God: as it is affirmed in scripture to be, *for the goodness of God leadeth to repentance*. If the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, and whose waters cast up mire and dirt, as the Prophet describes their case (Isaiah lvii. 20, 21.); and that, God saith, *there is*

no peace to the wicked; what can produce that happy ease of mind which follows hearty sorrow for our sins, but the conviction that through remission of sin we are reconciled to God's favor? Could any thing but God's goodness work this change, and raise this hope within us under the lash of conscience? Surely, while continuing in sin, no hope could visit us of being God's children, or inheriting eternal life.

Who, I say, worketh in us *both to will and to do* the thing that is right; is it any independant merit? Any *pure* endeavor? Any native power of our *own*? No one, sensible of the evil that is continually assailing him, both within and without, and that believeth that the human heart is *deceitful above all things*, and alloweth the imperfection of his very best works (as to any *intrinsic* virtue), and that *after all we are unprofitable servants*, no one, that has arrived to this degree of conviction, can doubt one moment to whom he is indebted for any valuable or permanent gift of grace! he must give all the glory to God. The Apostle will not suffer degenerated flesh and blood, a helpless, dependant creature, to lay the smallest claim to *merit*; for he affirms that we are saved by *grace alone*, (that is, by a free and gracious power displayed from above to enable us to discharge our duty, and by an equally free pardon of original hereditary imperfection.) And he affirms that it is of God's *pure mercy*, in order to exclude any vain application of virtue, from our *own unqualified works*; *lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works* (Eph. ii. 9, 10). For God hath reconciled us unto himself, by his Son, *for through him we have access by one spirit unto the Father*. And this leads us to the *second head* of this discourse; viz. To prove, that so far from having any real merit, in *ourselves*, it is *solely* for the sake of Jesus Christ, that we are rendered *capable* of any favor; that

that we are regenerated, or born again of water and the spirit, and thereby made meet to be inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.

First then, so far from our having any the least share of merit in the blessed work of our redemption, so as to obtain grace thereby to work out our salvation, the scripture expressly declares, that we are at enmity with God; and that Christ died for us when we were sinners, and in actual rebellion against him. He suffered to reconcile us to God AGAIN, which would have been quite needless, if we had been able to renew ourselves to righteousness. But, on the contrary, the Apostle terms the word of reconciliation committed to him to be this: *That God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself.* (2 Cor. v. 18, 19.) God, the Father of all mercy, designed this most gracious method of our recovery, through the all-sufficient sacrifice of no less a person than his beloved and only begotten Son. He, in tender love towards mankind, refused no sorrow or suffering to accomplish his Father's will, and effect our greatest happiness. Upon Him was laid the burden of our iniquities. *He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* 1 Tim. ii. 6. God appointed him as the means through whom we receive mercy and grace to help in time of need. For there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. ii. 5, whose atonement was so acceptable to the Father, on account of his perfect obedience, that his mediation is become effectual to all that believe. And God vouchsafed, in the counsel of his infinite wisdom, to admit this act of infinite mercy, as a full satisfaction to his offended justice, as a complete discharge of the debt contracted by the disobedience and rebellion of the creature. Now the virtue of this redemption, as it is rendered beneficial to us; or, in other words, the conditions or privileges of Christ's covenant, are that we are thereby incorporated in him, and be-

come members of the same body; that as he who knew no sin was made sin for us, so we (who of ourselves, independant of God's grace, can have no righteousness) might be made the righteousness of God in him: that is, might inew by the Spirit of grace, communicated to us for his sake, that we can now produce works acceptable to God. Just as the wild stock would remain fruitless or unprofitable unless the good bud or scion be inoculated or grafted into it. But this absolute dependance on Christ's merits, does not exclude the necessity of working in our own persons, for it is a condition, or rather a proof, of our being born again, or being made the righteousness of God in Christ, that we bring forth works meet for REPENTANCE, and demonstrative of our FAITH; and our possessing these very gifts or graces, is the essential mark or test of the effects of Christ's meritorious sacrifice being applied to us. Christ plainly requires from us, a lively and steadfast faith in the satisfaction he has made for us. And this is offered to all, since Christ died for the sins of the whole world: and if all have not the benefit, it is because all do not accept the terms, and will not use the means; that is, will not ask that they may receive, will not come unto Christ that they may have life. In short, necessity is plainly laid on us to work, because the Apostle exhorts us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, since it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, (Phil. ii. 12, 13.). For to what end doth God give us a power to work, but that we should work; and whereas we have no power of ourselves, therefore as God so graciously bestows the gift, it becomes incumbent on us to employ it with the utmost industry with fear and trembling, lest our slackness to profit by it should occasion its being withdrawn. We must work then because God commands it, and we must do all we can because he gives us ability, doubtless that we should use it to his glory. But still,

Still, after our best works, we are but unprofitable servants; we must not trust in them for acceptance, because we exercise the very power in weakness and imperfection. Nothing of *itself*, that we can do, will make us clean in God's sight, and much less can it be considered as the cause of any favor from him. All must be *clothed, covered, or purified* by the righteousness of Christ; that is, by the virtue and power of his redemption, to qualify us for appearing at all in the presence of an all-pure God, who sees folly in his very angels; and if the heavens are not clean in his sight, how much less then them who dwell in houses of clay (in impure bodies), whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the wrath, (Job iv. 18, 19).

What shall we say then? When we duly consider this our state by nature and by grace, how can we but admire and praise the divine goodness, in the language of the Apostle, Rom. vii. I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord, who hath delivered us from the body of this death; since it is for his sake we have received the precious gift of grace, which is necessary to work true faith in us, and to the praise and glory of which, he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6. For as by him (the eternal word) God hath made the worlds, and all that they contain, so hath he appointed him to be the mighty Restorer of all things. And it is through this heavenly mediator only that we experience the favor and mercy of God, who being the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, he bountifully makes known to us the will and pleasure of the Almighty. It is this adorable Savior whom God delighteth to call his beloved Son, whom he commissioned to be our teacher, and to whom we are commanded to attend, by no less authority than a voice from heaven, enjoining us to hear him. It is through him that God the Father doth bless us with all spiritual blessings, (Eph. i. 3).

For whose name's sake (as St. John writes: 1 Ep. ii. 12) our sins are forgiven: who assumes us himself (Math. xxviii. 18) That all power is committed to him in heaven and on earth. And St. Paul affirms, that none of us receive grace but according to the measure of the gift of Christ, (Eph. i. 7). This blessed Saviour who, after he had conquered sin and Satan, and restrained their power of injuring his faithful servants, by leading captivity captive, did triumph over these deadly foes by his ascension into heaven, and there sitting at the right hand of the Almighty Father, he hath obtained gifts for men, the power to defend his church, and establish it by various blessings to the end of time, even till God shall determine to destroy this world, to summon all mankind before him; of whom he hath appointed Christ the judge; and by whose sentence the wicked shall be finally condemned to everlasting punishment, and the righteous be exalted to life immortal, where they shall dwell to endless ages in the presence and enjoyment of Christ their God. Thus doth he declare to us by his holy word, that all the good we possibly can experience cometh down from himself the Father of lights; and that we receive the same through the merits and mediation of his beloved Son Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Savior. Surely, such mercies demand our utmost sacrifice of praise; and that this is acceptable and expected we have God's own word for it in the Psalms, where he declareth, whose offereth him thanks and praise he honoreth him; and we constantly find the Prophet David pouring out his soul to God, in the language of pious gratitude, as in the ciiid Psalm, *Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name: Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thine infirmities.*

But as a thorough sense of this goodness and our own unworthiness could never proceed from
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unenlightened nature; therefore it is a merciful revelation, that Christ hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious also; and this blessed and important truth leads us to the consideration of the third division of the subject; viz. That it is by the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost (procured for us by Christ) that we are rendered capable of receiving or employing these gifts, or graces, to the eternal interest of our souls.

Now as all arguments will prove ineffectual, without the influence of God's blessed spirit, it mightily concerns us, as real christians, constantly to implore the aid of that Holy Spirit, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son; for it is he (who like the power of the Sun on the earth) must inspire the ground of our heart to make it capable of receiving the good seed of God's word, and bringing forth fruit unto salvation. Without this, all our pains is but lost labor; and though we must prepare the ground, that is, strive to cleanse the heart, to render it a fit habitation for the influence of this blessed Son of righteousness, which only giveth life, yet no praise or glory is due to him who soweth, or watereth, but to him only that giveth the increase. We are not even partners in the MERIT; the obligation of our endeavors is the natural and bounden duty of creatures, of sinners received to grace and pardon. For the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teaches us that dying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, (Tit. ii. 11, 12). And if we neglect to do our part, that is, to employ the means of grace offered us, and to cultivate the degree of grace we have received, and the power and capacity of asking and seeking for farther help, we are guilty of a renewed rebellion and contempt of God, which renders us incapable of profiting by the improving

improving influence of this blessed Spirit, which will not descend into a wilfully impure, polluted, or a stubborn and disobedient heart; neither will he visit any who are puffed up with an opinion of the sincerity of their own performances and repentance, so as to persuade themselves that they have no need of any other satisfaction for their sins than their own perfection. And if it is true, that no man can profess a *saving* belief in Christ, but through the power of God's grace; or, as the Apostle expresses it, 1 Cor. xii. 3. *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*; equally must we be indebted to the assistance of the spirit, to understand and believe the great mysteries of the gospel; and this is more reasonable, because as the Apostle farther argues, (1 Cor. ii. 11, 12.) *As no man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of man that is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God*; and to this end (saith he in the next verse) *we have not received the spirit of this world; but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God*. And the necessity of this free gift is obvious, because the man of this world, or the natural man, receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; that is, as by the mere light of nature he cannot understand them, so they appear foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they only can be spiritually discerned; they require a different kind of light to shew their value and render them lovely.

It behoves us then, my brethren, to pray as earnestly for this spirit of wisdom as Solomon is recorded to have done in the ixth chapter of Wisdom, 10th verse, *Send her out of thy holy heaven, and from the throne of thy glory, that being present she may labor with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto thee*. And he farther acknowledges, in the 17th verse, *that no one can know God's counsel except he gives wisdom, and send his Holy Spirit from above*. If we ask his

his gifts in pure sincerity, with unfeigned earnestness, to know what is truly acceptable to God, we may rest assured that he will be found of all who humbly seek him. Our blessed Savior confirms this hope by a plain and indisputable inference; *that if we who are evil give good gifts to our children, much more will our heavenly Father give good things to them who ask him.* He will afford us strength to cleanse our hearts from the indulgence of all wilful impurity; he will teach us in the way we should go; he will comfort us under all our trials and conflicts. For, being every where present, by his invisible influence, and guiding all things into the truth, he will gradually qualify us for receiving still further measures of grace. It is by the light of his Holy Spirit that we are led to entertain just thoughts of God; *It is the spirit that giveth utterance,* or produceth our religious conceptions, that is, all our studies begun, continued, and perfected with a view to promote his honor. To him we are indebted for every increase of spiritual strength; for it is his power that *helpeth our infirmities.* The deep and constant sense of our sins, the earnest warmth of our devotions, and that inward and inexpressible contrition of heart, attended with the fears that our great unworthiness occasionally present, and which render our supplications for support, still more intense. All these are the workings of the self-same spirit of holiness, and answer to that description of the Apostle, Rom. viii. 26, *That the spirit maketh intercession for us with GROANINGS* (that is, lamentation or sorrow) *that cannot be UTTERED.* In short, as St. Paul asserts, by whatever

* The bitter sense of our great and manifold offences, and manifested misery; the deep repentance inspired by the inward impression of divine grace, exceeds all power of expression. And of this truth we may be most certain, because the carnal and corrupt will of man can never produce these dispositions. The careless and wicked do not experience these marks of grace, and an evil spirit would suggest very different thoughts and practices,

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good gift we are enabled to work to our Maker's glory, or our neighbor's benefit, it is the effect of the one and the *self same spirit*, dividing to every man *severally as he will*. And thus also, of every natural gift that causeth us to differ, even this degree of wisdom is not of ourselves; we have nothing but what we have received, and we should give God the whole glory, from whom alone every excellence of grace or nature is derived. And then the Prophet Jeremiah exhorteth us in the ixth chap. 24th verse. *That the wise man should not glory in his wisdom, as if it was his own; but let him glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am the Lord: and that I not only bestow these gifts, but exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things do I delight, saith the Lord.* And as this wisdom cannot be attained but by the Spirit of God, therefore it is most justly called *spiritual wisdom*. Now the treasure-house of this knowledge, or will of God, is the *Holy Scriptures*; for they, as Christ assures us, do *testify of God*; these contain the *written rules* by which we are to guide our words and works; and they were likewise the *inspired language* of the *Holy Spirit*. In comparison with the wisdom they contain, the wisdom of the world is *foolishness*. All other knowledge and learning, without this wisdom, is but *vanity*, as the wise man himself assures us: for though a man be never so perfect among the children of men, yet if God's wisdom does not direct him he shall be nothing regarded: that is, he must not expect God's favor. (Wisdom ix. 6.) And have we not recorded proof of this eternal truth? How insufficient to *true happiness* was all the learning of the ancient philosophers? What vain perplexities do we find in the profound reasonings which neglecting the will of God, were employed in the subtle disputations of human wit? Blind to the plain directions in God's word, they were divided by traditions, doubtful interpretations, and

and the favorite practice of different churches. Now as all these wandered long in darkness, because they would not use the *true light*, it should afford a lesson to us to pursue better wisdom, and, following the Psalmist's counsel, let us exercise ourselves in reading and meditating on God's law day and night. For his word is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths. It is that which giveth understanding to the simple, and ignorant, and its counsel is eternal life. By this study of the Holy Scripture we shall find out Christ, and in Christ we find out God; for he is the express image of the Father in goodness, and truth. And as he declares himself, that he who hath seen him, hath seen the Father, for the Father and he are one, (John xiv. 9). So, as one of the ancient Fathers (St. Jerome) asserts, not to know the scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ; for in them is he preached unto us. It is therefore indisputable, that in the midst of the light of worldly wisdom, and philosophy, we may yet sit in darkness and the shadow of death; for so we really are whilst ignorant of Christ; and unless we employ the gifts of reason and knowledge in that study, which will best promote God's glory and our own salvation. For as Christ is the wisdom of God, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and to whom all who are united by faith and love have built their hope on that sure foundation, whereby they will be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of God which passeth all other knowledge; so this is the true and only wisdom which best deserves the christian's study. This is that wisdom which St. Paul so earnestly entreats of God to bestow upon his Ephesians (iii. 16), That he would grant them according to the riches of his glory, so to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man. Clearly, therefore, this is the wisdom which alone proceeds from the power and assistance

assistance of the *Holy Ghost*; which was the last particular proposed for your instruction in the third division of this discourse, and which having been very fully proved by a variety of arguments, and testimonies, deduced from holy writ, we cannot conclude the subject better, than by hearty prayer to God, that we may have grace to see the *vast importance* of these truths, and continually to supplicate his goodness, to bless us with the *light of his Holy Spirit*, by whose divine influence only, we shall ever be able to serve him truly *here*, or to prepare ourselves for admittance into his heavenly kingdom *hereafter*. That we may therefore daily improve in all the graces of the spirit, to the bettering our lives, and conversation, and fitting us for the awful change awaiting us, God of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our blessed Advocate and Redeemer. Amen.

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DISCOURSE XXI

An Homily on the State of Matrimony.

HEBREWS xiii. 4.

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.

AS many engage in wedlock without that previous consideration which the serious nature of the ordinance requires, it may afford profitable instruction, occasionally, to reflect upon the end of that holy estate, and the benefits it is calculated to procure to mankind. The origin of matrimony, and the *causes* why it was ordained, are clearly delivered to us in the holy scriptures. It was instituted by God himself, out of his great wisdom and goodness, in order that his creatures, man and woman, should live together in an undefiled manner, in the mutual enjoyment of perfect and lasting friendship; to keep up the race of mankind, and to restrain the desires of the flesh within the bounds of a lawful and decent liberty. Thus this excellent institution is calculated to keep the conscience pure on both sides, by preventing the inclination of the animal nature to defeat their honest

honest purpose, and to suppress the many evils of a vicious conduct in both sexes, by this lawful connection, so solemnly sanctioned in this holy ceremony. Thus far, as in every other case, has God's goodness provided for the comfort, and innocence, of his creatures; and if their unbridled lusts break through his laws, it must be attributed to a depraved nature, that is unwilling to be reformed. And all who are guilty of violating the ordinance appointed for their safety, must abide by the account that will be registered against them for so doing. Whoredom, and all uncleanness, are strictly forbidden in God's word. In compassion to the infirmity of a degenerated nature, a remedy is here provided, and as the most grievous consequences attend the commission of such sins, and the most dreadful punishments have been inflicted for them in all ages, it argues an increase of guilt and perverse rebellion, to despise or violate so gracious a provision against impurity.

Again, another most valuable end of this holy institution is the enlargement and prosperity of the church and kingdom of God, not only in the blessing that is promised upon every honest union of the sexes, by the gift of children, but that hereby, a probable opportunity is secured, for bringing them up in the knowledge of God's word, by which means the interests of true religion is greatly forwarded in the regular succession from one to another, and a greater certainty attained, of many being prepared for a blessed eternity. For it is natural to suppose, that where any *doubt* is entertained as to the *true* relation of the offspring (which must be the consequence of all promiscuous intercourse) the innocent children are exposed to the most cruel fate; indifference and neglect too often take place in these cases, and they are left without due care and provision. This indeed, is one of the most serious circumstances that attends unlawful

connections of every description. From sinful conjunctions of God's holy ordinances of pure wedlock, alms may happen to brand his own offspring with perpetual disgrace; and the deprivation of all the communion rights of the community; and not only so, but on the other hand, he may also subject himself to provide for one that does not really belong to him; and thus confusion, misery, and curses, are entailed upon mankind, for encouraging such lawless courses as are hateful in the sight of heaven. Now as matrimony is appointed to prevent these evils, and many others; I shall forbear to name; as it helps the cause of virtue and religion, and promotes the blessing of the Almighty upon society, all who have the grace and wisdom to enter into this state, should be most grateful to God, that they are so far under the influence of his good Spirit, as to shun the example of those vicious people, whose ungoverned lusts contribute to spread poverty and misery wherever they go; whereas, all that are modest and virtuous of both sexes, continue to walk in the fear of God, to do good in their generation, within the bounds of the lawful commandments, and equally abhor all impure connections, as the certain method of incurring God's displeasure, and effecting their own ruin, both here and hereafter. For when men and women, in a single state, are so far without the fear of God before their eyes, as to yield to the temptation of the evil spirit, in gratifying their sinful appetites, while the wicked example of the world affords so many instances of abominable transgression against purity of manners; it must be admitted as a particular gift of God, to avoid such hateful practices. Wherefore all who have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, must give the praise, where only it is due, to God's grace and help, who hath thus preserved them blameless; and too humble and thankful it is impossible for them

to be, when they consider the fearful end of all such as continue to provoke the God of purity to punish them. The condemnation of all who offend in this way, is plainly and terribly set forth in these words of the Apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 9. *Neither whoremongers, nor adulterers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* Where all such must dwell for ever, after this their vicious career is over, is enough to alarm men from continuing in these beastly crimes; and so it would, if they prayed to God to turn their hearts from this evil in their fallen nature, and to touch them with a sense of the necessity of his grace, to save them from yielding to the ways of sin. But all who have embraced that mode of life prescribed by God's ordinance, have, through mercy, escaped this sentence, provided they live chaste and honestly, according to their marriage vows. But still, the very *best* require a constant defence to protect them from falling into temptation, and that is *prayer* and *vigilance*, lest they be surpris'd, for the subtle enemy is ever on the watch to divert the heart from holy meditation, and lead it into evil, if we give him any opportunity. He envies every happiness of mankind, and especially uses every means to break the peace of *that* union, which is calculated to supply both the greatest earthly comforts, and remedy against sin. If he cannot *dissolve* the knot by foul and scandalous means, he will try to work upon their *tempers* and *inclinations*, that are likely to promote uneasiness, and disagreement in other respects.

The greater the harmony of the parties, the more his devilish nature is employed to discompose it, and of the happiest state on earth, to form one restless like his own. Thus he attacked, and too easily succeeded, with the first married pair. Happiest of all, that ever thus were joined, because they lived in *perfect innocence*, and *dependence* on
their

their God. And this same enemy continues to assault our nature, and several conditions, in the *weakest part*, which, through the error of his *own* fall, and that of our first parents, he is well experienced in effecting. For the fond desire of *rule*, dawns in our very infancy, and grows up with us in our years; we are all inclined to have an high opinion of *ourselves*, a spirit that interferes with proper subordination. *Self-love* and obstinate *self-will*, are evils blended in our fallen nature, and tend to weaken the principle of *affection* instead of promoting peace. To restrain the tendency of these unhappy ingredients, which are more prevalent in some, than others, it is the interest of every married pair to cultivate a spirit of *love* and *harmony*; and that they may succeed in their endeavors, the only way will be continually and earnestly to implore the blessings of *God's grace*. This will enable them to soften their temper, as well as govern their desires, and render them *unanimous in all things*. And the duty of *prayer* is particularly valuable to married persons; for by each praying for the *other* in their more retired devotions, they will thereby check, and prevent all ground of discord, and build up a stronger foundation of mutual affection. And it is, doubtless, from the neglect of this most powerful *means*, that so many prove unhappy when they come together. They trust entirely to their *own* strength and some flattering quality in their own disposition. They raise their expectation of happiness upon principles that can never be *trusted*; that are liable to continual *change*; and not knowing the value of the security above proposed, they never think of putting it in practice. In fact, but few matches are formed upon a *pure christian sentiment*, and consequently, *this* means of preserving and promoting mutual felicity, is rarely, if ever, adopted by the generality of married people. And hence it comes

to pass, that the enemy so often gains his *ends*; that so many live unhappily in wedlock; and that *regret, reproach, disappointment*, and all manner of unchristian conduct, so frequently succeed the most solemn vows of a different behaviour towards each other.

Now *one* reason that *this* evil, among many others which people suffer, is not removed, is, that they do not consider that this same busy enemy is the secret promoter of their ungodly lives. This spiritual foe, who was the original cause of infilling evil into a man's constitution, takes pleasure in its *progress*; and the only method of defeating his malicious wiles, is ever to be upon the watch against the weakness of our nature, and to pray for strength to overcome the tempter. If this counsel was but diligently followed, anger would have less power over the human mind; and *that* being once restrained, bitter words, and still more savage actions, would be less in use, and Satan's manifold temptations happily defeated. For this is a truth of natural consequence, that when once *abuse*, and disobliging manners, have taken possession of either party, all cordial affection, all pure esteem, must soon depart; and the melancholy observation we may daily make of the wretched lives *they* lead, who, lost to a due respect, and feeling for each other, are yet compelled, through personal convenience, to live together, should caution every one against the *beginning of strife*; which, when once admitted, doth hardly ever end. Now all this might be prevented, if people were sensible of the power the evil spirit hath over all who forsake the paths of godliness, and who never pray that they may not fall into temptation. And thus by giving way to their several bad humours, mutual threats, upbraidings, and contention for authority, they lead lives as unlike christians, as though they never had received the *title*, but evince the possession of every contrary

contrary temper to the spirit of religion. All therefore who wish to live peaceably, and happily together, in the marriage state, must apply to God for grace to rule their hearts. And on the husband's part, the exhortation of St. Peter, 1 Ep. iii. affords a plain and useful lesson. The precept forms part of the marriage ceremony, but it is to be feared few attend to it when read, and few follow its sound advice. *Husbands*, (saith the Apostle) *love with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered*: that is, let all christian husbands treat their wives, in a tender and condescending manner, as the weaker sex, acting in every respect towards them as christianity requires; esteeming a christian wife as an heiress of the same heavenly happiness with himself, that so by such virtuous, and obliging behaviour towards her, their religious devotion be not hindered, or rendered vain, by any difference of principle, or disagreement of temper. This precept, you perceive, particularly concerns the *husband's* conduct, for he should set the example of pure affection, and of christianity, and promoting peace, the happy effect of which assuredly would take place, if prudence and gentleness, instead of violence and tyranny, direct him. And if he make all reasonable allowance for the difference of his companion, as to strength of mind, experience, and (possibly) the advantages of *education*; correcting every vain fancy, and shallow opinion to which the infirmity of the sex may subject them, by *sound reason*, and *deliberate counsel*, he will act a part that must turn to good account; for it behoves the husband not to carry his authority with too high a hand, which would favor more of the *master* than the *mate*. He must therefore be kind to the failings of his companion, admonish gently, where necessity requires, and learn

to cultivate a christian forbearance. But among the common sort of people, this is often thought beneath the character of a man's importance. They judge it a mark of womanish cowardice, and for want of religion and humanity, they are apt to uphold their government by *anger, moroseness, and sometimes still sharper power*. But this is a dangerous error, and will never produce a quiet or happy life, wherefore the opinion of St. Peter will be a better rule to go by. *Reasoning, not quarrelling*, is what he recommends, as more becoming the dignity of man; and that the woman should be borne with, as not possessing an equal fortitude, or command of mind, being, from her weaker constitution, more fickle in her ways, and more easily provoked to anger. In compassion to this infirmity, she is to be *spared*, not treated *roughly*, and the happy consequence would be, that instead of feeding strife, the affection of the woman towards her husband would be increased, and all the desires of her heart, through gratitude, and esteem, would bend unto his will. For even good dispositions, though they may be liable to natural weakness, will sooner be persuaded to their duty by gentle means, than *force*; and, depend upon it, a different conduct will never succeed. Severity, or a proud superiority, will only produce deceit and fear; it will lay the ground of discord, falling off of love, and especially cool that *cordial friendship*, which constitutes the *highest satisfaction* of the marriage state, where all interests are, or *ought* to be so united, as to render *one will* the principle of every act between the parties; for they should be one in mind or soul, as well as in body and estate. Hatred, disgust, and perpetual squabbling, is a wretched character of that peculiar engagement which Christ hath chosen, to represent the *union of himself and Church*.

Lastly,

Lastly, the article of prayer, and religious deportment, is manifestly interrupted by variance and discord between married people. This, as the Apostle observes, is an article of the *greatest moment*, for how can either party pray to good effect, when their minds are inflamed with passion, or animosity against each other? And what is to become of any of us, if we neglect this duty? The spirit of the Lord's Prayer extends to all mankind, and when we openly declare, that we will forgive them who have offended us, and that we ask pardon of God for *our own* transgressions upon this *very condition*, how can we expect a hearing, while we know we shall proceed to cherish strife as soon as we have done? and if we neglect to pray at all (which under the influence of discord, and dissention, is most likely to be the case) how shall we be enabled ever to reform, or resist the snares our enemy is multiplying for us? How shall we ever obtain comfort and support under every peril and necessity, but by prayer? Thus you may observe, that every kind of mischief, both temporal and spiritual, will be the consequence of an haughty obstinacy, or violence of manners, which is more descriptive of the society of beasts, than reasonable creatures, especially *christians*. God doth not allow these things, and his holy servants advise against them, but the devil desireth them gladly; and as all who have any sense of their soul's value, must wish to avoid his kingdom in the next life, so they must study to belong to the kingdom of God in *this*. It is by no means inconsistent with the lawful authority of a *man*, to avoid the part of a *tyrant*; and it is no less a mark of a true christian, to carry his authority with a gentle hand, and to pass over such little deficiencies in the deportment of her it is his duty to *love* and *protect*, as in due time will greatly help their reformation. Whereas, for want of moderate management, they are likely to become

still more intolerable. Such a conduct is both pleasing to God, and honorable to man himself, and will ever be found to improve the comfort of the marriage state; which, like every other thing in this imperfect scene, affords much arduous trial for our christian virtues.

Let us now proceed to consider the duty of the wife. How is she to conduct herself under the government that has been laid down, as the most happy mode to strengthen, and to sweeten the bonds of matrimonial union? Placidity, in the general behaviour, and submission to the husband's superior knowledge, and just authority, are *acknowledged* duties on *her* part. Contradiction, and disobliging manners, and attempts at *lessening* his authority, either in what respects herself, or those that should be subject to him, are all contradictions to God's commandments; and accordingly the same apostle writes thus to wives upon this very subject, 1 Pet. *iii.* 1, 2. *Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.* Here we see *obedience* is expressly recommended; unbecoming controul, and inclination to *command*, and domineer, must consequently be avoided. Over children and servants they may *divide* their rule, but their husbands they should *obey in all things lawful*. Surely it is a most pleasing sight, and the very life of peace, and happiness, when a wife, with modest respect, is ready to perform whatever the judgment of her companion proposes, as most expedient for their mutual benefit; when she is industrious to anticipate his wishes; to fulfil his pleasure; and cautious of giving him uneasiness: This, I say, *endears* the state of wedlock, and renders it *truly honorable in all*. And the good effects repay the kind endeavor; for, in truth, this is the secret way to obtain *such a power* as will improve their mutual comfort. Again, a *good* wife will gradually, and deservedly, gain

gain such an influence over her husband's heart, that she will in fact govern, without any *unbecoming appearance of so doing*. Her cheerful and sensible submission to his judgment, will work such an *esteem*, as to prevent his ever being absent from her society, but when necessity requires it, and then he will be induced to *hasten* his return, from the pleasing reflection that his *best part* and happiness is at home. On the other hand, when women give way to stubborn, froward, peevish, or uncivil tempers, men are in a manner *driven* from home; their own houses become even worse than prisons to them; and when they return, it is more like the meeting of enemies than friends.

After all; in this imperfect state, and with a nature exposed to numberless infirmities, it is hardly possible but that offences may sometimes happen to the very best, to those most wary in their conduct; for there is no man without some faults, and in the weaker sex it would be still less likely to expect *perfection*. The only remedy, when cases of this kind on either side present themselves, is for *neither* party to hold out in defending their *innocence*, at the expence of the *other's blame*; but rather let them *confess* their faults and failings honestly to each other, the instant reason reassumes her seat; and jointly lament the common frailty, whether passion, or whatever *other* cause, hath brought about the disagreement: where a woman is possessed of a *christian* spirit, she will quietly submit to polite reproof for hasty conduct, and being kindly forgiven, she will naturally be cautious not to renew the fault. And this behaviour certainly becomes them, because, as christians, they will not only consider their vows to man but to the Lord. They will call to mind St. Paul's advice, Eph. v. *Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the woman, even as Christ is the head of the church.* In which words,
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the command of God himself most clearly requireth honor and obedience to be referred to the *husband*. St. Peter also, in another place, reminds all wives, that the manner of the holy women of old, (matrons he calls them, supposing them to be married) was to ornament themselves chiefly with the character of putting their whole trust in God, and being in obedience to their husbands; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord; and whose daughters ye are (says he) if ye carefully follow her example*. And as it cannot be denied, but that in consequence of a degenerated nature, women are expressly subjected by that law to many sorrows and trials in wedlock, which they might be exempted from if they continued single and virtuous; yet as the state is necessarily appointed by God, and declared to be *honorable in all*, and instituted in divine wisdom for the *valuable ends* set forth in the beginning of this discourse; all that remains for them is to study the principal of *all holy women*, which is to place their *hope and confidence* on the Almighty, by which the Apostle means, that they forbear not to marry through any dread of the *cares*,

* Nor would it be an unprofitable precaution, if all who entertain the thought of entering the marriage state, were diligently and frequently to read the *marriage service*, as soon as their minds are turned to such a serious engagement. This, with application to God for help, might afford an easy and valuable means of preventing them from pursuing such courses, or falling into such temptations, as too often happen to those who depend upon their own virtue and self-sufficiency. There are many solemn and important passages in this *form*, that could not fail to strike the heart that was well disposed; and thus the most serious of all human ties would not be so often dishonored, and held as a light matter of mere *outward ceremony* to render these unions *legal*. They would dwell especially on *this* passage, that none are lawfully married in the sight of God, but such as *come together according to his word doth allow*. This sentence therefore of the Apostle, and occasional attention to the above advice, would be extremely serviceable both for men and women, in order to imprint upon their minds the serious nature of the state in which they were about to engage, and the sin of dishonoring it in any shape.

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the dangers, or the sorrows that may attend it, but committing all their concerns to God's good pleasure, in most sure trust of support after they have duly called upon his Holy Name for help. And if every woman would do this, they would find themselves in time so favored by their Maker, that they would never be without the ministry of his angels to protect them, or of his faithful servants on earth to help them, whenever their several truly affecting situations, might call for inward consolation, and tender care. Obey then your husbands; be careful of their interests; be diligent in consulting their happiness; and by so doing, you will both honor God, and adopt the surest means of experiencing peace and comfort in the holy state in which you have engaged. And as a sure and valuable encouragement to all who behave themselves becoming their stations, this further blessing of God is recorded in the book of Psalms. All things shall prosper (both to man and wife) if they fear the Lord, and live prudently and uprightly, according to the designs of God's institution.—*Blessed are they who fear God and walk in his ways; they shall eat the fruit of their own hands. O well are ye, and happy shall ye be. The wife shall be as the fruitful vine upon the walls of thine house, thy children as the olive branches round about thy table. Lo! thus shall the man be blessed (saith David) who feareth the Lord.* All who are married, or who intend to marry, would do well to keep these several admonitions in their minds, and then they will become more likely to enter this estate as becometh christians, with godly intentions and undefiled bodies. There is a passage in St. Paul which particularly relateth to that subjection which the woman oweth to the man, and he instanceth the dress she weareth on her head to be a sign thereof; and as being intended to shew that she is under a state of obedience to her husband. As the man is supposed to defend her

her from all injuries, and to administer all manner of comfort and protection she may need. To the natural consequence seems to be, that she should submit to the just dictates of his authority*. He taketh further occasion also, from the design of this part of the woman's apparel, to admonish them that every other part of it should tend to the promotion of *modesty* and *humility*; for if it be not becoming or decent (*lawful* as the Apostle terms it) to have her head uncovered, but to wear thereon the token of her being under power wheresoever she goeth, much more surely is it necessary that she should shew forth by her *general practice*, what is represented by this custom in a *particular* of her dress. And the Apostle illustrateth it by the example of the holy women of old times, *who called their husbands lords*, and shewed their respect by their *obedience*.

But perhaps some may be ready to object, that the *husbands* of *those* days were no less exemplary for the *purest affection* towards their wives; whereas in these more degenerated times, there is too often subject of grievous provocation, from the exercise of a *very different behaviour*. This we shall not pretend either to investigate, or *dispute*; the only object of this part of the discourse being merely to prove and recommend the positive duty of the *weaker sex*, even as before we fairly stated that of the *husband*, and not to administer unbecoming reproofs or insufficient excuses. For example, when we teach our children to obey us, as is reasonable for parents to expect; or when we endeavour to reform our *servants*, by telling them, they should obey their masters, not only as *eye servants*, to

* Even in *law*, a woman *under coverture*, as it is termed, (that is, while *married*) is incapacitated generally from any *positive* act of her own will, and this expression of her limited power seems to relate to the observation of the Apostle, as to the *distinction* of the female head dress, in his time.

obtain the praise of men, but as servants fearing the Lord, who requires this duty at their hands: If they should reply, by pointing out to us our duties, we could not commend their conduct, (as certainly it is not their place to *dictate*, but *obey*.) Again, when people are exhorted by their superiors to mend their ways, it assuredly would not demonstrate a wise *beginning* of reformation in them, to draw *comparisons* and object the faults of *others*; for though a person may have a *companion* in his transgression, it by no means establishes his own innocence, so that all which truly concerns the accused, is to endeavour to prove themselves *unblameable*. Now of the weak and unprofitable practice we are exposing, the example of our first parents furnishes a plain and powerful proof; for Adam laid the blame of *his* falling upon the *woman*, and she again attributed it to the *serpent*, but neither of them were excused on their feigned pretence for wilful disobedience; and therefore none must presume to build a breach of duty on such lame apologies, that, because *another* is deficient, therefore *they* may err. The purport then of this discourse is to point out the duties of *both* parties; to admonish them *equally* to perform them; and to direct them to scripture precepts, both for the authority of the doctrine and the good effects that will attend the *practice* of it.

Husbands must be gentle and forbearing; wives respectful and submissive: let each concern themselves principally with what belongs to their *own sphere*, and be cautious not to exceed the bounds of the commandment. By so doing, they will lay a sound foundation of prosperity and peace, and triumph over all the snares their common enemy may maliciously contrive to disturb their happiness. For all who walk in the fear of the Lord, will not be so anxious to reflect the duties or delinquencies of their *companions*, as to be careful in discharging
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what they know to be *incumbent on themselves*. This is the true way of shewing obedience to the Lord, by all who make *his laws* their *rule of life*. And even in cases where on either side there are exceptionable dispositions, still the chief motive of all good conduct, (God's will) and the trial for future reward, must urge the parties to *resignation* and a *discrete deportment*. For as he who loveth his friend, cannot be said to undertake a very difficult task, but he who dealeth charitably by his enemy giveth proof of the hardest of the two duties; so should it be in the marriage state. If you endure the trial of sharper treatment than could be wished, greater will be your reward hereafter, than by grateful return for the *harder usage*. For if your gentleness is merely the effect of the *utmost indulgence*, on your husband's part, this is so very easy and pleasant that no *great excellence* can be ascribed to such *incumbent duty*. It is true, churlish and severe behaviour is highly unworthy the character of a *husband*; but if with such ye have to do, prudence and religion adviseth *patience*, and not *rebellion*. And by persevering in well doing, a good report and profitable example reacheth to the neighbourhood round, on which ever side it happens, whether it be the wife who submitteth to a surly master, or the man who beareth with a fractious, peevish *companion*. When each are resolved to live like *christians*, though an accidental storm may sometimes arise, they will *in general* be sure of a quiet station.

To conclude with the continuation of this *same figure*; you will do wisely, my brethren, to consider *this life* as a troublesome voyage at *best*; and that in *wedlock*, as in every *other state*, we must embark with good hope and prospect (amidst the *heaviest storms*) of arriving at that haven where all our intervening troubles will be largely recompenced, and even the *pleasures* of the voyage not worth remembering, from the superior happiness of our *real home*.

home. We must all consider (whether married or single) that we are hastening to a place where *there is neither marrying or giving in marriage*, but *there we shall be as the angels in heaven*, provided we beg God's grace to do his will in our respective stations. And to conclude in the words of the marriage service, ye doubtless will experience everlasting peace at last; if ye continue to do *well in this new state of trial*, and *are not afraid with any amazement*. That is to say, if you keep firm to your duty, as *christian wives and husbands*, and be not discouraged from fulfilling any instance of it by present dangers or inconveniences. May God give us all grace to live in every state to his glory and the saving our own souls, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.

home. We must all consider (whether married or single) that we are hastening to a place where there is neither marrying or giving in marriage, but that we shall be as the angels in heaven, surrounded by God's grace to do his will in our respective stations. And to conclude in the words of the marriage service, ye doubtless will experience everlasting peace at last; if ye continue to do well in this new state of trial, and do not offend with any unbecoming. That is to say, if you keep firm to your duty, as Christian wives and husbands, and be not discouraged from fulfilling any instance of it by present dangers or inconveniences. May God give us all grace to live in every state to his glory and the saving our souls, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.

And thus we have seen the necessity of the sacrament of marriage, and how it is necessary to the state of matrimony.

When we consider the nature and authority of the sacrament of marriage, we are struck with the consideration that it is a sacrament of the Church, and that it is necessary to the state of matrimony. We are also struck with the consideration that it is a sacrament of the Church, and that it is necessary to the state of matrimony. We are also struck with the consideration that it is a sacrament of the Church, and that it is necessary to the state of matrimony.

DISCOURSE XXII

An Homily against Idleness.

2 THESSALONIANS, chap. iii. verse 10.

For when we were with you, this we commanded you,
that if any would not work, neither should they eat.

WE have abundant reasons, and authority to assure us, that man was not created for sloth and ease in this life; but, on the contrary, to support himself by his industry and labor. But by the depravity of his nature (through sin) he is become so *changed and degenerated*, that he now looks upon idleness as no evil, but rather a desirable thing, and especially becoming those who are rich. And, indeed, it is by most men too much considered as a degree of happiness, in that it is friendly to the pursuits of vain pleasures, and sensual appetites, and affections. On the other hand, close employment, or labor, is esteemed as a *painful thing*, and interfering with the pleasures of sense. In order, therefore, to shew you the great error of such notions, it will be proper to prove, that,

that, by the appointment of God, and in consequence of the nature which man inherits, it is positively incumbent on every one to use the utmost diligence, care, and labor, in that particular profession, calling, or situation, in which it has pleased God to place him. And that, consequently, as idleness is a positive contradiction of such a commandment, or law of nature, it is in itself a weighty sin; and it being as unavoidably attended with many inconveniences, and mischiefs, it must likewise be considered as a manifest, and serious evil. Now, when this truth is clearly understood, you will readily perceive, that the design of this discourse is to caution you against suffering by this evil; and, on the contrary, that every man should earnestly apply himself to a diligent discharge of the business of his profession, or to honest labor in his particular trade, or calling. And to encourage every one so to do, we may rest assured, that what may be proved to be God's will and appointment, must ever be attended with his blessing, and abundant advantages to mankind.

We read that after the Almighty had created man, he put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, Gen. ii. 15. Hence we may conclude, that he was not formed, even at first, to live in a state of sloth and inactivity. But when he had transgressed God's commandment, by eating of the fruit of the tree which was forbidden him, God immediately removed him from that delightful paradise, into this vexatious vale of misery, which was *curst* and *changed* for his sake: and hence it became *more necessary*, that he should exert his strength and industry, for the joint conveniences of health and support. Accordingly God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken, and to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, all the days of his life. It is very clear then, that the providence of God

God has designed that every man who is sent into this mortal and transitory life, should be engaged in some honest profession, or industrious course of labor; and that every one should *mind their own business*, and *study to be quiet*, and conduct themselves uprightly in their respective stations. *Man* (saith Job) *is born to labor*. And the wise son of Sirach also exhorteth (Ecclus. vii. 15) *not to hate laborious work, neither husbandry, which the Most High hath ordained*. Solomon likewise advises us (Prov. v. 15) *to drink the waters of our own cistern, and the running waters of our own spring*. By which wholesome admonitions, we are instructed in the wisdom and profit of living by our own labors, and not to be idle, and prey as drones upon the industry of others. When St. Paul understood that there were some among his Thessalonians who lived dishonestly, and disorderly; in other words, who would not work, but were become busy bodies (which is always the case of idle persons), not laboring for their own bread, but living at free cost, and at their neighbor's expence; he commanded the Thessalonians, not only to withdraw themselves, that is, avoid the company of all such unworthy persons, (as is expressed in the words of the text.) But, he adds also, if there were any among them so worthless, as not to work for their living, *neither should they eat*; that is, he orders that such should not be relieved, or receive any encouragement to continue as *useless members* of the community. Now, doubters, this doctrine of the Apostle's is grounded on God's own ordinance, that every man should labor, and, consequently, all men should pay respect to it, and none should make any excuse for disobeying it.

But here a natural distinction doth obviously present itself, for when it is said, that *all men should labor*, this does not strictly mean, that all men alike should submit to *bodily* labor for their

daily food, but only that there are several kinds or degrees of labor; some in which the *mind* is employed, some exercised by the *body*, and others by *both*. Thus every one (except prevented by age, infirmity, or want of health) ought to exercise himself in some sort of study, or employment, both to supply an honest provision for his own support, and to promote the general good of the community he belongs to, according to that station to which it hath pleased God to call him. So that whosoever contributeth to the benefit of the commonwealth, or that society of men of which he is a member, whether it be by his public office or ministry, or by assisting in the ordinary business of life, by administering counsel to, or teaching and instructing others; or by whatsoever means his time is well occupied, so that some advantage be derived from his employment to mankind; all such persons are not to be looked upon as *idle*, because they do not *actually work with their hands*, but are as justly deserving of a reward for the exertions of their several callings, as those who are appointed by Providence to earn their bread by hard labor. In short, it would be inconsistent to require *such* kind of labor of persons whose minds are sufficiently employed in *other* services, for the good of their fellow creatures, and themselves.

As a censure and admonition at the same time against the effects of *idleness*, St. Paul, in 1 Tim. v. exhorteth his disciple to avoid and *refuse those idle widows who go about from house to house, not only on account of their being idle, but because they are talkers also, and busy bodies, speaking things that they ought not*. And the prophet Ezekiel, xvi. 49, when he numbereth up the sins of the city of Sodom, placeth *idleness* as the foremost and chief introduction to all the rest: Her sins, saith he, were *pride, luxury of feeding, abundance, and idleness*. These sins were of old the
downfall

downfall of Sodom and her daughters (that is, the cities that were subject to her). Nothing, surely, ought more to alarm us against the fatal consequence of idleness than the horrible example of that city, and all the country round about it, which was visited with such a singular punishment as fire and brimstone from out of heaven. Nothing, I say, should more engage a people to follow industry than the fear of falling into such sins, as may provoke the vengeance of the Almighty upon the whole land.

Now all who give themselves up to sloth and idleness, or to wilful and wasteful spending the fruit of their labor in loitering about, and in drunkenness and debauchery; all who by their sluggish dispositions, and evil lives, do bring themselves at last to live like drones upon the labors of their neighbors, all such do clearly break the commandment of the Lord. They go astray from the calling he hath appointed them, and are in constant danger of being visited by God's various and severe punishments in this life; or, which is still more dreadful, of being consigned to endless destruction in the next, unless, by hearty repentance, they turn most truly unto God; and shew their sorrow by the change of their lives and conversation. It would take up a considerable portion of time, to instance all the inconveniences, and evils, which affect a man's body as well as his soul, in consequence of yielding to an idle course of life. At present it will be sufficient to mention some of them as particularly described in the holy scriptures: *An idle hand (saith Solomon) maketh poor, but a laboring hand maketh rich.* Again, *he that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with, or have plenty of, bread; but he who liveth in idleness is a very fool, and he shall have poverty enough.* (xxviii. 19). And, in another place, he saith, *The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold of the winter, therefore shall he beg*

in harvest and have nothing. (Prov. xx. 4). But there is no necessity to multiply proof that poverty is the consequence of idleness. Daily experience convinces us too plainly of this sad truth, in every place where we go, and of other woeful effects likewise of this breach of the law of nature; for great part of the misery that is to be found among many of the poor, is doubtless owing to nothing so much as *idleness* and *sitting*, which generally attends it, whence follow other evil practices of course. By yielding to the latter ruinous habit, men of the greatest industry, and of the most fortunate situation in point of trade, have often been reduced at last to beggary, and their families to the greatest distress. There is another cause also, which very much promotes the vice of idleness, and that is the negligence of parents to let their children *in indolent example*; to strive to have them instructed in sound and profitable learning, honest labor, or some useful trade, or occupation, by which means they would be qualified, in due course of time, to get a fair, and competent living. Nor is idleness less hurtful to the health of the body, than the mind. Too much ease and sleep, and want of exercise, lays the foundation of numerous disorders, and disposes men to become a prey to many temptations of the great enemy, which they might otherwise have avoided. But all these disadvantages, though they are certainly grievous evils, in that they are very injurious to bodily welfare, and temporal happiness; still they are not to be compared to the harm they do the *soul*, by the danger to which idleness exposeth that better part of man. For it will be easy to perceive, by observation, that idleness never is a *single* bad companion to any one; but hath always a long *train* of vices depending on it, which spoil, and corrupt the whole man so effectually, that he becomes at last the slave of many sins. *Idleness* (saith the son of Sirach) *teach-*

eth much evil: and one of the holy Fathers call-
eth it the mother of mischief, and the step-mo-
ther, or enemy, to all virtue, and that it doth in
a manner prepare the way to hell; for where idle-
ness is once encouraged, there the Devil is always
ready to slip in, and sow all manner of wickedness,
to the everlasting ruin of men's souls; for the man
that is idle, is exposed to every snare, and the man
who is drunken must unavoidably be often idle.
Again, the consequence of sloth, is strongly paint-
ed in Mathew xiii, where it is said, *that the enemy*
came while men slept, and sowed tares among the
good wheat. And nothing is more true, than that
the evil one is never so sure of his prey, as when
men sleep; that is, when they are idle, and off *their*
guard against his wiles and temptations; then it
is he is most busy; then do men afford him an
easy opportunity of leading them captive at his
will; then doth he fill them with all manner of
wicked thoughts and designs, and, being void of
God's grace, he hurrieth them to certain destruc-
tion. We have two memorable examples of the
danger and dreadful consequence of idleness, re-
corded in holy writ; in characters too, who had
been singularly distinguished by God's gifts and
favor, before they fell from his *protection.* The one
in King David, who staying at home *idly* at the
time *kings go forth to battle,* (as the scripture express-
eth it) he thereby fell into a grievous snare, as most
men are liable to do, who neglect their *proper*
business. During this unarrantable leisure, he was
soon tempted by satan to forsake the ways of holi-
ness, and actually committed two of the most
grievous, and abominable crimes in the sight of
the Lord, even *adultery* and *murder;* and the plagues
that were visited upon him, in just punishment for
these offences, were horrible and severe, as do
plainly appear from the remainder of the story, as
recorded in God's holy word. The other example

given us, is of God's servant Sampson, one of the judges of Israel, who, during all his battles with the Philistines, who were the enemies of God's people, always came off conqueror through the gift of the great strength and valour with which the Lord had endued him, as an instrument in his hand for good; but as soon as he gave himself up to *easy* and idle pleasures, he not only was tempted to lead a loose, and vicious life, with the dissolute Dathan, but also was taken captive by the enemies he had so often conquered, and miserably deprived of his sight, that sense which conveys the most delightful enjoyment we are capable of experiencing: he was confined in prison, and forced to grind in a mill, and at last produced in public, as an occasional laughing stock, and common sport to his enemies. Now if these two men, who were once such excellent characters, so well beloved of God, so highly favored by him, with the most remarkable and heavenly gifts, the one of *prophecy*, and the other of *strength* surpassing all *human powers*, if these men, who could not be overcome by the utmost labors, or most vexatious troubles, fell at last into the most shocking crimes, only by yielding themselves, for a short time, to indolence and idleness, and thereby acquired such habits of provoking sins, as brought upon themselves the most dreadful plagues from the hand of God, what mischief, what evils, must all people expect to befall them, sooner or later, who pass the greater part of their life, perhaps the whole of it, in sloth, or sinful idleness? Let no man deceive himself with a vain imagination, that little harm can come of doing nothing; for it is a true saying, that by doing nothing, it is that a man learneth to *do evil*. Let every one, therefore, who professeth to be called a *christian*, or who wishes to be one indeed, be continually employed in some honest work, that the Devil may not find him idle, and unpre-
pared

pared to resist his attacks. This evil spirit, our bitter enemy, is always at work, he is never idle, but goeth about continually seeking whom he may devour: let us therefore resist him by sober watching, and perseverance in well doing; for he who is diligently employed in an honest calling, is not so easily taken by the Devils snares. But common observation shews us, that when through idleness, or for want of some honest employment to gain their bread, men are brought to poverty, how easily such men are tempted, for the sake of gain, to lie, to cheat, to practice every method of injuring their neighbors, and sometimes even to *for/ear* themselves, bearing false witness against the innocent, proceeding even to robbery and murder, and other the most base and wicked means to get a living: by these practices not only a man's good name and upright conscience, nay his life is often forfeited; but, what is worse than all, he provokes the punishment of the Almighty, who is able to *cast both body and soul to hell*. And here it is worthy your notice, that not only an *idle life*, but also a suspicious, or dishonest employment, is very likely to bring a man to *servew at the lust*: for certainly there are modes of getting a livelihood, which some men choose, that expose them to almost as many temptations as idleness itself. But, perhaps, they are *profitable* or *easy*; if the latter, idleness has a great *share* in their choice; if the former, covetousness, the most dangerous of all habits the soul can be devoted to, is at the bottom; and, by yielding to either of these temptations, they hazard the eternal ruin of both soul and body. There are some employments, for example, that the very principles of them, nay the proof of any *excellence* in them, leadeth to *knavery* and *daceit*, and consequently to *lying* (the Devils chief character) and to *debauchery* of various kinds. But a wise and upright mind would argue thus: What is it *to me* that

that these seem necessary in the traffic of a wicked world; be it so; it is by no means necessary for *me* or *mine* to be involved in the general guilt, if possibly it can be avoided: and indeed while there is abundant choice of sober, and useful acts to support the life of man, no decent, modest, well-meaning character, need plunge himself into a sea of *wisful danger* and *temptation*. For there are some pursuits in life, a man had much better have never been born than meddle with, and though they may be ever so gainful, *what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?* what signifies a temporary success in life, if a man dies absorbed in vicious courses, with a foul and hardened conscience, and leaves a curse entailed upon his children, with his money thus dangerously gotten? Lo! the end of the idle, and those who pursue *ungodly gain*. Loss of character, perhaps of life; for a man may be guilty of shortening his days more ways than by breaking the laws of his country, and (without *repentance* and the great mercy of God) he may experience the portion of everlasting misery in the world to come.

Surely, then, all men have good reason to beware of giving way to *idleness*, when it is evident they who follow it, are yoked to the most dangerous companions, together with what they foolishly suppose a pleasant race; and the very many bad effects of this vice has been so obvious to wise and good men of all times, that upon consideration of the mischief the community must inevitably suffer, where idleness is allowed to proceed, they have occasionally and carefully provided the severest laws for the correction and amendment of this very evil. There was a law in force among the Egyptians, that every man should bring his name every week to the chief rulers of the place where he lived, and at the same time set forth, in what walk of life he gained his support; and this was done

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with a design to punish idleness and reward industry. And the Athenians, upon this principle (which is a just one) that idleness was the mother of all mischief, did punish slothful and idle people, no less than heinous offenders against the public laws. For it was the custom of the Areopagites, or chief magistrates of that city, to call every person to a strict account in what manner they lived; and if they discovered any idle person who in no shape did benefit to the commonwealth by their labors, they were immediately banished as unprofitable members, that only lived to disgrace and injure society. And indeed in our own country, most excellent laws have been framed from time to time to take up and punish all idle vagabonds, and loose travellers who go from place to place, without any visible means of getting an honest living; who neither serve their Maker or their prince, but live by impositions of various kinds, preying upon the fruits of other mens labors; being in general given to lying, drunkenness, swearing, plundering, and all manner of dissolute courses; refusing to stick to any honest labor, and giving themselves to nothing else but to invent and execute every kind of mischief that the master they serve can present unto them.

Now there is no remedy against these evils equal to a due discharge of the natural duty of every parent, and relation in power, towards those children or dependants intrusted to their charge. The ruinous effects of idleness in all its shapes, would be greatly prevented if youth were brought up with sober care, sound instruction, and the habit of honest labour, or the employment of some useful trade which would enable them in time to provide decently for themselves, and perhaps to contribute towards the necessities of those who are really objects of charity and compassion. But as to those who have thus unhappily gone out of the way, St. Paul's advice should be attended to: let him who stole, steal no more; and

and also let all who have hitherto lived by deceiving others, or used unlawful ways of getting their bread, immediately leave off these wicked practices, and labor rather working with their hands the things which are good, that they may have that which is necessary for them; and also be able to give to others who stand in need of their assistance. And David expresseth his sense of the happiness of that man who liveth by honest labor, in these words: *Blessed art thou that shalt eat the labors of thy hands, happy art thou, and it shall be well with thee.* And this happiness or blessing is fully proved by the following considerations.

First, (as Solomon truly saith) that every man doth eat and drink, and enjoy the fruit of all his labor, is the gift of God. Secondly, when a man liveth by his own labor in an honest calling, he thriveth with a good conscience, which is the most inestimable of all treasures. Thirdly, such a man eateth his bread not with discord, strife, and misgiving, but with peace, quietness, and comfort, when he contentedly laboreth for the same according to the Apostle's advice. Fourthly, he hath this vast satisfaction within himself, that he is not dependant upon, or obliged to any particular person for his support, nor is he under the necessity of hanging upon or waiting for the uncertain favor of others; but he so liveth on his own foundation, that he is master of what he gains. In short, the honest laboring man and his family, while they are industriously employed, are secure from the temptations and opportunities of sinning, which they who live in idleness are continually exposed to.

It is perfectly agreeable to the subject we are now upon, to observe further, that all artificers and other workmen, who receive their wages for their labor, should make a conscience to God and their neighbors (that is their employers) of discharging it faithfully, and not to waste their time in sloth,

left

lest they incur the sin of defrauding those who are at the expence of their wages and provisions, there being as just a claim on *their* part to the laborer's honest service, as the latter hath to his stipulated hire. Indeed, in one respect, such eye servants are worse than idle, because they knavishly take a reward for doing less than in their power fairly to perform; for there is certainly not so much sin in being idle, and receiving nothing, as in taking wages for what a man has not justly earned; this being a double iniquity. And as it is true, that the Almighty is highly displeased with all who wrong the laborer of his hire, and that the cry of such gross injury ascendeth up unto God for vengeance: so it is no less certain, that he who is untrusty in the performance of the work he hath engaged to do, is considered in the sight of God as a thief and cheat. Against which dishonest conduct St. Paul doth thus admonish the Thessalomians: *Let no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such.* Whosoever therefore would wish to live and die in a good conscience before God; that person, however low or poor he may be in rank, or circumstances, who putteth his whole trust in the Lord, for a blessing upon his labor, and believing that he will provide all necessary things for his support suitable to the station in which the wisdom of his providence hath placed him; let him continue to employ himself in honest labor, and it shall be well with him.

If men did but seriously attend to the *strict* meaning of this expression of going beyond, or *entwisting* their brethren, what a check would it be to all fraudulent dealing! For there is scarce a trade or profession but what the buyer or employer is in the power of the seller, or those to whom he is compelled to apply in the common traffic of life, to negotiate concerns he cannot manage himself. And in some kinds of dealing more than the other, the purchaser is entirely at the mercy of those in whom he confides. To take advantage therefore of the ignorance of others, and abuse their confidence, is an infamous aggravation of dishonest principle.

And

And if through sickness or other misfortune, with which it may please God to visit him, he becomes unable to work any longer, yet let him comfort himself with this assurance, that because he served God in his health, and his neighbor truly with his labor, God will never forsake him, nor shall he want in time of distress or difficulty.

In recompence for his honesty and industry, when health affordeth him the means of support, the Lord will provide for his necessities, by stirring up the hearts of good men to relieve and comfort the unfortunate, the sick, and those who are past their labor. Whereas he who is reduced to poverty through *laziness*, or after having consumed what was gained by dishonest labor, he can have no reasonable hope of having God his friend in time of need. It behoveth all, therefore, who get their bread by the sweat of their brow, according to the appointment that God hath allotted them, to avoid every temptation to *idleness* or unfaithfulness in their particular callings; remembering that St. Paul (Eph. iv.) exhorteth all men to put away lying, that is all manner of deceit and dissimulation, and to use truth and plainness with his neighbor, because, saith he, we are members together of one body, under one head, Christ Jesus our Savior.

In the conclusion of a discourse upon such a subject, a word of advice may not be unreasonable to that class of men, whose walk in life is distinguished by *private service*. Persons in this way

* Many of this description are apt to pass much of their time in *idleness*, and those persons which we have abundantly shewn to be the pernicious fruit of it, and never so much perhaps as in those days, when their numbers are so increased as an appendage to *city*, and for the gratification of the reigning *delicacy* of *sumptuous* life, or having but little to do as to laborious employment, being high fed, and exposed to temptation by the various dissipated scenes in which their superiors are continually engaged, they contribute more to the universal dissoluteness of manners in both

sexes,

of gaining a support, should make the most of every opportunity to improve their mind and preserve themselves from danger of the abundant temptations to which they are exposed. They should never forget, that service is *no inheritance*; that age will overtake them with the rest of mortals; and that it would be the highest wisdom to occupy their leisure hours in some profitable employment, whereby they might increase in *knowledge*, preserve their *character*, and grow in favor with God and man, and thereby they would become more capable of every kind of service*. It would be a laudable practice in those who have been neglected in their youth, to apply themselves to such useful learning of different kinds as they might easily obtain in many places, if they were *well disposed*. Young men cannot too much consider the precious value of *time*, or be too cautious of wasting it in idleness, debauchery, gaming, and dissolute company, which is the ruin of the greater part of all mankind. They should remember that youth is but *vanity*, and must be accounted for before God. — However merry and thoughtless thou mayest be in thy youth, (saith the preacher) how light soever thy heart may be in thy early years, however joyfully thou mayest *then* walk in the ways of thy fancy, and the desire of thine eyes; yet be assured, that *for all these things* God shall bring thee into judgment.

— *What class of men whose walk in life is dissipated*, than perhaps any other class of people in society. And what is truly lamentable, there is little prospect of reformation, as the cause of the complaint seems to be daily *increasing* instead of diminishing.

* Such a description of servants would retrieve the reputation that hath often been merited by their *fraternity* in former times, when a discrete and faithful servant was justly represented as a choice though humble *friend*; and truly so they are, when conscientious and respectful in their conduct; for greatly doth the internal peace and happiness of families depend upon them; but it is to be feared from the *woeful change of manners* in our present age, that this order may be too often considered now, in a very different light, as parties in various injuries to their benefactors.

May the Lord of his goodness and mercy, put it into the hearts and minds of all who have the power of rule and punishment, and of all who have the care of families upon their hands*, to strive as much as possibly on them lieth, to reform this great and growing evil of idleness, which is a disgrace and injury to the community, a high dishonor to Almighty God, and draws down a heavy plague on those unprofitable subjects themselves. To let sin go unpunished, is to encourage men in disorderly and unlawful courses; when people *persist* in scandalous offences, not to put the laws in force against such impudent proceedings, renders a public officer a positive *partaker* in *private crimes*. To let the wicked escape, through any partiality or favour to particular persons, is the most unjust and injurious thing that can be practised. It gives boldness to others, to become vicious, and throws a burden on the *innocent* and *needy*, which the *guilty* has deserved, and *alone should bear*. In short, it is violating those laws which God's goodness hath appointed for our safety and happiness. By such conduct, and by neglecting to bring up youth in a sober and useful manner, we provoke God to inflict judgments upon ourselves and families after us. It is recorded for our admonition against such blameable proceedings, (Num. xxyth.) That as long as the adulterous were suffered to live licenti-

* As much of the bad conduct of servants in general is certainly to be attributed to the loose example of their superiors in every situation, so doubtless the cautious conduct of masters and mistresses in their own manners and conversation, and a regular and pious order in their families, is the first and most essential step to be taken to remedy the universal complaint of dissolute, insolent, and unconscientious domestics of every description. And another obvious and effectual check to the progress of this complaint, would be a religious resolution never to give an equivocal character to any servant who has been guilty of gross misbehaviour and criminal conduct, for this is the cause that the evil spreads instead of diminishing; and such behaviour is besides a most cruel and injurious breach of pure good will towards each other.

ously;

ously, without reformation or punishment, so long did the plague continue in Israel, as you may see if you read that particular chapter. But after due correction of the people, the Lord's anger was immediately pacified, and the plague ceased. It is happy for us, that God doth not visit now with such frequent and fierce chastisements; but there is a plague in the *consequence* of all sin, that will sooner or later overtake those places, where it is too lightly considered. And if it reaches not in *this* life, it will not fail to be the eternal portion of the wicked hereafter. Let all officers and persons in authority therefore, look strictly to their charge; let all masters and mistresses be careful to reform every misbehaviour in their families; let them use the authority that God hath given them; let them not maintain or encourage idle or debauched persons, but free their households and the country of such unworthy characters, that idleness, the parent of all mischief, being clearly rooted out, or at least *discountenanced*, the Almighty may turn his dreadful anger from us, and bless us with his covenant of peace and prosperity for ever; through the merits of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Savior. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

only, without intention of amendment, to be
did the same continue in it, as we may see in
you read the spiritual chapter. The same
corrected in the people, the Lord's answer was
immediately, "I will, and the plague ceased."
is apparent, that God does not visit men with
such plagues and sore judgments, but that
as a plague is sent upon one of his sinners, so
for his sake, to make those who are in the
too light, to be so. And it is not in vain
life, it will not fail as the eternal portion of
the wicked, but that all officers and ministers
in authority, and those who are in the church,
in all matters and things, be careful to do
every thing in their families, to be in the
the same way that God hath given them, let them
not murmur or murmur, but let them be
some, but let their households and the country of
in their own houses, that all the people
of the church, being thus, upon one, as at
last, to be in the church, and let them be
themselves, and let them be in the church,
that of men and property, for ever, that the
name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour,
to wrong, with the Father and the Holy Ghost,
all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

For the same reason, as we have seen in the
of the church, and let them be in the church,
that of men and property, for ever, that the
name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour,
to wrong, with the Father and the Holy Ghost,
all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

The Homily on Repentance.

ACTS iii. 19.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins
may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing
shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

THERE is nothing that the holy spirit of
God doth so *strongly* enforce throughout all
the scripture; there is nothing with which he is
more earnest to impress the mind of man, than the
necessity of repentance, amendment of life, and a
speedy returning to the Lord God of Hosts. And
the reason is most clear; for by our wilful trans-
gressions, and stubborn disobedience, we do daily
fall off from the service of our heavenly Father,
in a manner terrible to reflect upon; whereby we
purchase to ourselves (were God to deal with us
according to *rigid justice*) the deserved penalty of
eternal misery. No doctrine therefore, that is held
in the church of God, can be more needful, often
to be explained, than that of contrition for our
past offences, and the expediency of a *sincere re-*
formation of our lives. And in truth, if we strictly
preach

preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and the glad tidings of salvation, we can never separate these two things, *repentance* and *forgiveness of sins*. This our Savior Jesus Christ declareth himself, in St. Luke xxiv. 46, 47. saying, *So it becometh Christ to suffer, and to rise again the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.* And the same doth the Apostle affirm in Acts xx. 21. *I have witnessed* (saith he) *both to the Jews, and to the Gentiles, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* We read also that John the Baptist, the son of Zacharias, began his ministry with exhorting to repentance, saying, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* (Matt. iii. 2.) The doctrine then, which forms the subject of this Discourse, is the same which our blessed Lord taught in his own person, and commanded his Apostles to preach continually.

Numerous are the passages that might be quoted from the prophets, to prove the necessity of this saving doctrine of *repentance*; and that it is what all ranks and degrees of men should equally attend to. It will be sufficient at present to refer to that particular text taken from the iij chap. of Joel, and 12th ver. who exhorteth to repentance in these words: *Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil; he changeth his purpose of punishment, when men confess, and bewail, and forsake their sins.* We have here a perpetual rule appointed us, which we should ever observe and keep in mind. We here perceive, that there is no other way, as an effect, or proof, of Christ's merits having wrought for us; in other words, that God's dis-
pleasure

pleasure is appeased, and his anger turned from us. There is no other condition, or fruit of grace on which we can build, and on which God has promised to remove the fierceness of his fury, that is, those heavy punishments and that swift destruction which we have provoked his righteous judgments to bring upon us. And this you see we are exhorted to do without delay. *NOW, therefore, saith the Lord, return unto me.* There is a very valuable consequence in this manner of the prophet's speaking: for in the former part of the chapter, he had painted to the people in strong colours, the terrible vengeance of God, which no man was able to endure; after which he proceeds most tenderly and earnestly to exhort them to repentance, in order that they might obtain mercy; and we may paraphrase or explain his words to this purpose.—“I would not have you receive these threatenings as though there were no hopes of grace or pardon left, for although you do by your sins deserve to be entirely destroyed, and God in righteous judgment hath determined to bring severe destruction upon you, yet even *now* that ye are in a manner on the very edge of the sword; still if ye will immediately return to him, if ye will apply humbly and earnestly for grace and power to correct the error of your ways, he will most gently and mercifully receive you into his favor again.”—Now by this declaration we are happily informed, that repentance is never too late, provided it be *sincere*: provided it sheweth its proof in *amendment* of life. But this important caution we should at the same time *most seriously* attend to; that the great *uncertainty* of life forbids us to delay it *one moment*, at the very peril of our souls. *For there is no repentance in the grave, whither all are hastening*, and may be hurried suddenly, and *unless we repent we shall all equally perish*. But in support of God's great goodness in this respect, we have this most comfortable hope,

that as God in scripture is pleased to be called our *Father*, doubtless he will shew the *nature* and disposition of tender and merciful fathers, who receive nothing with greater joy, than the return of their children to a parent's love, through the happy means of a blessed reformation. This is abundantly shewn by Christ himself in his charming parable of the penitent and returning prodigal, to his forgiving father.

The Lord doth likewise declare by his prophet Ezekiel, chap. xviii. 23. *That he hath no pleasure at all that the wicked should die, but that he should return from his ways and live.* And here it is expedient for you to observe, that the necessary condition is, that the sinner *must turn* from his wickedness,—for though the Lord *willeth* not the *death* of a sinner, and would rather he should *live*,—yet he cannot possibly take pleasure in his *evil ways*. If he *dieth* in his sins, he must *perish*, (as the former part of this very interesting chapter fully sheweth.) And the *reason* is, because nothing wilfully impure, or that maketh a lie, can possibly enter into the presence of infinite purity, which is the nature of God. Now *not to be with God* is misery inconceivable; to be banished from his sight, is to be in hell, for there can be *no* happiness where God taketh no pleasure to dwell, whether it be in eternity, or in the human heart. In another place, God declareth by his prophet Isaiah, and also very particularly by St. John, i. 1, 9. that if we *confess our sins*, (by which is obviously implied the *forsaking* of them) *God is faithful and just* (to his promise) *to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, that is, to help us by his grace to gain the victory over our evil habits. All these comfortable promises are confirmed in many parts, and by many examples of holy scripture. We are told, that when the Jews were willing to receive, and cherish the blessed counsel of the prophet Isaiah,

God indulgently succoured them with his powerful arm, and in one night slew by the avenging angel, the most mighty and valiant soldiers in the camp of Sennacherib. (Isaiah xxxvii. 36.) Again, the example of king Manasseh affords most glorious consolations to the *truly* penitent and reformed sinner, who wisely takes up in *time*. The full account of this offender's reformation you will find in 2 Chron. chap. xxxiii. 12, who, although he had been guilty of all manner of most abominable wickedness, returned at last unto the Lord, was heard of God from the *sincerity* of his prayers, and change of life, and most graciously restored again to his kingdom. And it is judiciously observed by the prophet, that *then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God*. Further instances of God's tender love towards returning sinners might be readily produced, but I shall close this feast of blessed hope to the convicted and converted at this time, with recommending to you the very particular cases of Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, and the penitent thief, all of whom, and many more, experienced the same divine grace and favor, upon the *sincerity* of their repentance.

Now all that has been advanced on this important subject, should afford a never-failing comfort against the temptations to which our wounded conscience may be exposed, for it is through this weak side, our bitter enemy continually endeavours to shake, or rather overthrow our faith, or trust in God, and thereby hopeth to drive us to despair. But God is, and ever will be, above the devil; and therefore all who are happily sensible of their sins, should apply these comfortable declarations and examples to themselves; and say, yet *now will I return unto the Lord*; apply for grace as they did, and doubt not of receiving relief. Neither let the remembrance of your former lives discourage you. The more rebellious you have been,

the deeper let your sorrow be, and the more fervent and earnest your *repentance* and *amendment*. And depend upon it, you will speedily find the ears of the Lord will be open to your prayers. But let none venture to trust to the most dangerous of all the devil's snares; viz. that though he *wilfully continues* in sin, the same grace may be in store for him, as others have found, though late: since this is the sure way to become reprobate, that is, to be forsaken of God, and to lose all right judgment of the things that belong to our everlasting peace. These promises and helps are held out, only to the *contrite* of heart, the *convinced* sinner, the *diligent* penitent, and not to the presumptuous, and perverse offender. And lest any one should unhappily be deceived in a case of such serious consequence to their eternal welfare, it will be useful more closely to consider the commandment of God in this respect. *Turn unto me* (saith He) *with all your hearts*, by which words he sets forth plainly every thing that can possibly be spoken concerning the nature of repentance; which signifies in few words, a *change of mind and life*; the returning of the whole man unto God, from whom we are fallen off by a course of sinful and unprofitable pursuits. But as this is a subject of all others the most important in its nature, it will be proper to dwell very fully upon it, and to this end you will do well to give serious attention to the four following points:

First, From whence, or from what *things* we must return.

Secondly, Unto *whom* we must return.

Thirdly, By whom we shall be *enabled* to return, or be converted. And

Fourthly, The *manner* of our returning to God.

First, There will be no difficulty in pointing out the *things* from which we must turn aside, for in two words, they are *our sins*; whereby we have been led away from God, which, as the Prophet

Isaiah

Isaiah doth truly observe, chap. lxix., do *separate* God and us, and occasion Him to hide his face, that He will not hear us. Now under the name of *sin*, we are to understand, not only such words and actions, which by general judgment are accounted filthy, and unlawful, and consequently are *abominable sins*, but also, all those inward, and impure desires of the flesh*, which as St. Paul declares in the vii of Galatians, do resist the will and spirit of God, and therefore must be most carefully kept under. We must heartily repent of the false opinions we may formerly have entertained of God, whereby we were inclined to think more lightly of our transgressions than the evil nature of them deserved, and which thoughts consequently came under the above description of *inward sin*, or sins of the *heart*, and naturally proceed from false notions of God's purity and holiness†. And because, for these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience, no one can expect to escape punishment, as long as he *continues* in them. All therefore who pretend to repent, and still go on to indulge their passions, and vices, must be considered as worthy of condemnation; because to make a shew of loving God, or to wish to become his humble and faithful servants for ever in heaven, and yet live in any wilful sin, is as great a contradiction, as it would be to declare we have pleasure in the light of the sun, and the beauties of nature, and at the same time blind ourselves so, that we could not see them.

Secondly, Let us inquire unto *whom* we ought to return. *Return as far as unto me*, (saith the

* That we occasionally experience the *assaults* of these, will not be imputed to us as *sin*, but that we *encourage*, *dwell* upon, or *delight* in them. Such conduct is reproachable, and dangerous.

† *Thou thoughtest that I was such a one as thyself*, saith God. Psalm xxi. This most truly, was *thinking wickedly*, and justly deserved the reproof and punishment of God.

Lord). It is to God, therefore, we must return, or be converted, and to him *alone*, for he only is the truth, the life, and the fountain of all goodness. But we must strive hard that we do so far return, as even unto Him, nor should we ever rest, till we have found him, and made him our friend. Now the question is, How is this to be done? And the answer is equally short, as it is satisfactory. It must be by *faith* in his word, and power. For since God is a spirit, he can no-how be approached or received, but through *faith*, or a steadfast belief and trust in the revelation of his divine will. They therefore are under a most dreadful mistake, who either place any dependance on the creature, (according to the fond and vain inventions of men) for help, or who trust in their *own merits*; knowing that the scripture declares our *best righteousness* (independant of the qualifying aids of God's grace) to be but as *impurity* in his sight. Indeed it must be level to every capacity, that as nothing strictly good can exist but in, and from God, so we must necessarily apply to the *fountain* whence alone it is derived, if we mean to possess any *share* of it. For as the Apostle observes, after all *we have nothing but what we have received*. Thence it is clearly proved that it is to God only we must turn, if we would be truly happy here, and hereafter. Nor are others less removed from danger, who make a beginning of conversion to the Lord, or in other words, make some *shew* of repentance, and change of life, but unhappily faint and fall off in the attempt before they arrive at the mark that is set up to direct them safe. This proceeds entirely from a *weak* faith, and the force of evil habits; and should be a warning to all who are wavering, and likely to be drawn aside, to take greater care of their ways, and apply with all their might for help. And this leads to the *third* particular proposed for your consideration, and which contains a most valuable article to encourage

encourage the humble and penitent sinner to persevere in his wise and good resolutions.

Thirdly then, Since we of our own mere selves, have nothing worthy to present unto God, to atone for our daily and foul offences against his pure nature, and tender long-sufferings towards us; but do as naturally avoid him when we have sinned, as our first parents did after they had fallen from him by *disobedience*, (for they earnestly sought to *hide* themselves from the sight of God, being conscious nothing sinful could stand before him;) hence it appears, that we plainly stand in need of a mediator, or friend, to bring us to him, and reconcile his favor to us again, who for our sins is justly displeased with us. Now this friend or mediator (such as only heaven could have furnished) is JESUS CHRIST, who being perfect God, and equal of one substance with the Father, did at the appointed time, out of his most marvellous love (such as only God could shew) take upon him our frail nature of flesh and blood, was born of the blessed Virgin, by an undefiled generation, through the mighty power of God, who doth all things in the perfection of purity and wisdom. By this gracious appointment, Christ became capable of being a mediator between God and us, to satisfy the most rigid demands of justice, and to reconcile us to the favor of the Almighty. Of this glorious Person doth the Father speak out of heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* And our Lord doth thus declare of himself, Matt. chap. iii. *I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.* You see therefore *through* whom you must return to God, and *to* whom you must apply to enable you *so* to do. To him alone, who by the sacrifice of his precious body and blood made full satisfaction unto God for the sins of the whole world. The Apostle St. Peter i. 1. declares, *That he was exalted to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel,* both which
he

he commanded to be preached in his name, and from which command, it is clear, past all dispute, that they must be greatly mistaken who preach repentance without faith in Christ, since repentance itself is the *gift* of God to man for *Christ's sake* alone: And to teach the ignorant, and unlearned, that repentance consists only in what men can do of their own mere power, would be to deceive them fatally, in the most essential article of their salvation. However highly good works, and amendment of life and manners may be recommended, and esteemed, it is most certain, that on *true christian principles*, they are nothing worth in the sight of God, but through *faith in Christ*, and the efficacy of his sacrifice; that is they are not accepted of God as the *cause* of our pardon, but the *effect* of the free grace bestowed upon all who call upon him, trusting in the merits of his Son. And the truth of this is *self-evident*, for it is undeniable, that occasional and partial good may flow from motives that are very *deficient* in strict *christian purity*; whereas those works which proceed from the source of all perfection, from the love of Christ, and obedience to the precepts of his Gospel; that is the virtue that is well pleasing in the sight of God. And Christ himself confirms this everlasting truth in these words, *without me ye can do nothing*. Any christians, therefore, who think they have effected a complete repentance by any power of human nature, independant of the grace of God, to be obtained through the mediation of the Redeemer, and by prayer to Him, are plainly contradicting the word of God, because they seek that effect from their *own* works and deserts, which should only be expected (or indeed *can* be obtained) through the interest and power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and for the merit's sake of his death and sufferings. He is the *light*, and the *life*, the cause of our being at all accepted, and of our receiving
power

power from on high, through the influence of the holy spirit, to work out our salvation. We must acknowledge our own wretchedness; be earnest in prayer for help; and use every means and measure of grace vouchsafed us, to incline our will to the will of God. And this introduces the *fourth* and last observation that was promised to be made upon this subject; viz. The *manner* of our returning to God.

It hath already been shewn, from the words of the Prophet Joel, *how* we are to repent. And they comprehend every thing, both inwardly and outwardly, relative to this very important article.

First you must observe, he would have us return unto God *with our whole heart*, which leaveth no room for hypocrisy and deceit: for unless our conscience is sincere, the following observation of the Prophet Isaiah, (xxix.) might be justly alleged against us. *This people draweth near unto me with their mouth, and worship me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Secondly, He requires that our *actions* do testify that we have a pure love of holiness, and an unfeigned desire to worship and serve him in truth, and earnestness, that is by forsaking every practice that is contrary to God's will, and giving up ourselves entirely to his service, according to what is written in the law, Deut. vi. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.* So that it is plain, no room is left for our dividing our affections between God and the world*. We are to love the creatures in and for God. Much less can there be any excuse for yielding to the desires of the flesh, because as the heart is the seat of our strongest de-

* When therefore it is said, *The love of the world is enmity with God*; this doth by no means discourage *natural affection*, but is only designed to guard us against loving the *creature* independant of the *Creator*; against improper attachment to the world, as our chief good; against the vanities and sins with which it abounds.

fires,

fires, as many as turn unto the Lord with their whole heart, they live unto him and him only. He is the chief object of all their actions, and they will never love the creatures less religiously on this account.

Lastly, (and to draw to a conclusion of this part of the subject.) No man can be said to repent him *truly* of his former sins, who is fickle in his purposes every way. One while obeying God, and soon laying aside his good resolutions and discrete behaviour, and returning to his evil courses, and an improper love of the world. And as the great infirmity and depravity of our nature, and the sinful affections that the flesh is consequently heir to, do continually oppose our pious and penitent designs, the prophet doth well advise us to return with *fasting and weeping*. By which he doth not mean a superstitious and fanciful abstinence from any *particular* provision, but a due government of our bodies from *excess of every kind*, whereby the increase of fleshly lusts, and a stubborn and proud self-will, may be rooted out, or kept under from defiling us. And this is the meaning of the Apostle's *keeping under his body and bringing it into subjection, lest after he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away*. The prophet doth likewise recommend both *weeping and mourning* as *marks* of our repentance, by which he designeth to shew the necessity of godly *sorrow*, and humble contrition, which powerfully declare the *sincerity* of our repentance. All this is natural and necessary for the returning sinner. By such conduct he acknowledges the justice and righteousness of God, and that he deserves punishment at his hands. It doth also in some degree repair the offence that may have been given to our weaker brethren, by a former course of folly and perverseness.

Instances of becoming conduct under a penitent state, are no where more frequent, or instructive, than

than in the practice of king David, that bright example of true contrition of soul. But these, and what further observations remain to be made upon this most interesting subject, shall be deferred to the next discourse upon it. May God bless all who apply to this essential study, with a speedy and happy change of mind and life; that they may cause joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth, and be found finally themselves of that *blessed number*.

Now to God, &c.

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Dis-

DISCOURSE XXIV.

The Homily on Repentance continued.

Same Text.

IN the former part of this discourse on these words, you had this essential doctrine of repentance very clearly explained to you, and the practice of it most earnestly enforced. It has been set before you in four distinct points of view; and we come now to consider more fully, the judgment and example of king David, respecting the *conditional* part of the text, as expressed in great part of the 25th Psalm: this penitent prince, not satisfied with *privately* lamenting his sins, doth publicly declare and exalt the justice of God, in *punishing* them. By which confession, he furnishes a check to those persons who otherwise might have abused his example, by continuing to *sin* more boldly, supposing that a little *outward* sorrow, would finally make amends for a long course of wickedness. You see then, that all who will not confess, nor

lament their sins, or who *continue* in them, although they *pretend* a sorrow for them, are very far from *true repentance*; nay, they may be said by such conduct, rather most wickedly to glory, and rejoice in their transgressions.

Now to prevent any mistake of so serious a consequence as this; and lest any one should think that repentance consists in *outward* weeping and other *signs* of sorrow, the Prophet plainly sheweth, wherein the principal part of this duty lieth, in these words before quoted in the last discourse, *Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.* This is spoken according to the custom of the Eastern nations, who were used, upon any thing very grievous befalling them, to tear their clothing, in token of their vexation and uneasiness: and hypocrites have frequently counterfeited these marks of concern, vainly thinking, that such apparent arts of temporary sorrow, might pass for the whole of true repentance. But the Prophet teacheth a very different thing; that it is required to be contrite in *heart*; that we must utterly *bate* and *forsake* all manner of wickedness, and resisting it with all our might, return unto the Lord God, from whom we had before departed, through the deceitfulness and folly of sin: for God hath no pleasure in merely *outward forms*, but requirerh an *humble*, and *broken* spirit, which he will never despise, or cast out, as David doth fully declare in the 51st Psalm. Nor in truth is there any other value in these outward acts, than in proportion as they proceed from an unfeigned and deep sense of our past errors, and great unworthiness, they contribute to glorify God, and edify one another, by the *integrity* of our example.

Further: to this saving doctrine, and serious exhortation, the Prophet doth also advance several holy *reasons* to confirm it, which he grounds upon the

the nature and perfections of the Deity, and by which he proves, repentance is most expedient and profitable to men. For, as in other things, men are apt to faint, when they perceive that they are laboring in vain, we must therefore take especial care in the article of repentance, not to suffer ourselves to be discouraged, with a fear that our best endeavours will not profit us; lest, on one hand, a dangerous despair should take place, or on the other, a graceless inclination to *continue* in sin, which will most assuredly *lead* to despair. And, in order to defend men from these evils, the prophet setteth forth the great grace and goodness of God, who is always most ready to receive his creatures to favor whenever they truly turn unto him; and this blessed hope he proves, by the same titles which the Almighty giveth himself unto Moses, in the xxxivth Exodus, 6th verse, where he thus speaketh, *For the Lord God is merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*, and, as the Prophet adds, *repenteth him of the evil*; that is, in other words, his mercy leadeth him to compassionate our infirmities and afflictions, and to avert the judgments we have deserved, whenever we are truly sorry for our offences, and amend our ways; or, as Moses expresses it, *keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin*.

First, the Prophet describeth God as *gentle and gracious*, to convince the mind, that the Lord, of his own nature, is more ready to *pardon* than to *punish*, as the words of the prophet Isaiah do testify, 1vth chap. 7th verse. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*. Secondly, he exalteth the attribute of God's *mercy*, or (as it is translated according to the Hebrew phrase, in many parts of scripture) the *bowels of his mercy and*

kindness, by which strong expression, is represented the great natural affection of parents towards their children, in order, by the force of the comparison, to give comfort to the desponding heart; for, as David observes, so elegantly and pathetically, *As a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him: for he knoweth whereof we are made, he remembereth that we are but dust.* Thirdly: the Prophet representeth the Supreme Being *as slow to anger, and of long suffering*, that is to say, not lightly provoked to punish; and this is done to stir up our GRATITUDE, and to *humble and shame us* for our unworthiness towards him. Fourthly: he is said to be of *great kindness*, and this every creature must *confess*; for he is the the endless fountain of all goodness, and rejoiceth in the *salvation* of his servants. To that end did he manifest his power in the creation, by producing a race of beings to whom he might shew all manner of good, and finally make them partakers of his heavenly riches. Lastly; he is described, as *repenting him of the evil*. The true meaning of this part of his character is, as before intimated, that God doth refrain his threatened and intended judgments against the wicked, when he seeth men *repent in earnest*, and turn unto him by such conduct as agrees with the spirit of his commandments.

Now from the sense of all these observations it is very clear, that God's favor and punishment are *conditional*, and for this reason we do most justly abhor, and condemn, the dangerous opinion of those, who wickedly endeavor to persuade the simple, and ignorant, that if men happen to fall into any gross sin, after they are come to the knowledge of God, and have been grafted in the faith of his Son Jesus Christ, that in such case repentance will be of no benefit to them; that there

is *then*, no more hope of reconciliation; or to be again admitted into God's favour*.

The advocates for this false and dangerous doctrine, pretend to defend it from what is said in the viith chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, 4. 5. 6th verses; in the xth of the same, 26, and 27th. and iid. chapter of 2d epistle of St. Peter, 20, 21st verses. They abide by the mere *letter* of these *detached* passages, without considering that the holy apostles do by no means affix *reprobation* to the *daily failings*, which as long as we are in these weak bodies, we are exposed to continually; or to the sins *bewailed, repented of, and resisted in future*; but they speak there of the *total, the final falling away* from *Christ* and his gospel; the *loss of all faith in him, a distrust in his power, and denial of the Holy Spirit*, by which his ministry was conducted. These passages, which such people misinterpret, allude to the sin against the Holy Ghost, which *shall never be forgiven*, and that for the plainest of all reasons, because by refusing *his* help, they utterly forsake the *known truth*, and may truly be said to *hate* Christ, and his word. They both crucify and mock him, by their foul apostacy, by which they bring inevitable destruction upon themselves, and fall into a desperate course, which *prevents* them from *repenting*. For when we deny the necessity of God's Holy Spirit to guide and assist us, we clearly *forsake* him; he then consequently forsaketh us, and we cannot repent, for *repentance* is the *gift* of God, or in other words, one of the choicest *fruits* of the Holy

* The whole scripture condemneth this doctrine; it is only a wilful continuance in known sin, that unfits the creature for God's favor. The denying the faith; the doubting of the all-sufficiency of Christ's merits, and infinite satisfaction; the rejecting the influences of the Holy Spirit, by leaving off to implore his aid; taking delight in wickedness; running into temptation, and slighting the appointed means of grace, such conduct exposeth the creature to God's displeasure.

Spirit. And that this is the *true* meaning of God's word, in these passages, appears most evidently, from many other parts of scripture, which promise *free grace*, and forgiveness of sins to all who are found to be truly penitent, and do humbly and sincerely turn unto their God. To relieve you then from such disheartning impressions as such a doctrine is calculated to make, it will be useful to consider the spirit of the few following texts (among the number that might be adduced for the penitent's comfort) which will sufficiently prove the cheering truth we are defending. In the ivth chap. Jer. i. God thus expresses himself by the mouth of his holy prophet: *O Israel, if thou wilt return (saith the Lord) return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, thou shalt then not remove.* Isaiah in the lvth chapter, and 7th verse, speaketh to the same purpose as before quoted. And in the vith chapter of Hoshea, and 1st verse, the Prophet invites to repentance in these words: *Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath smitten, but he will heal us, he hath wounded, but he will bind us up.* Again, in the xxxiiid of the prophet Ezekiel, 19th and 16th verses, the Lord declares, that *If the wicked turn from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawfull and right, he shall live thereby,* nay, that *none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him, on his repentance he shall surely live.* From all these texts, and abundant others, and indeed from the whole tenor of the gospel, (which is the New Covenant, grounded in the fruits of repentance, and faith in Christ) it is evident, past all dispute, that these invitations must be understood as being made to such as once believed in the Lord, but by their sins and wickedness had departed from him, no less than to others, who were called from their original darkness unto light. For here is the obvious difference in the two cases; the *first* cannot with propriety be
said

said to turn again unto a person with whom they were never before: whereas, such as have lived wholly in ignorance of God, and are at last convinced and converted, in strict propriety of speech can only be said to come to him. COME unto me all ye that are heavy laden (saith our blessed Lord) and I will refresh you. Observe, he doth not say return unto me; and as sure as all who do come unto God, through Christ, will not be cast out, so equal comfort is held out, even to the backsliding person, that if he returns unto God, and CONTINUES to serve him, he shall be accepted. And thus the grace and mercy of God is freely offered even unto forgiveness of sins, to all who unfeignedly return unto the Lord their God. And the natural consequence is, that though we should fall after we have experienced the grace of God through faith in Christ, (for there is not a righteous man on earth that sinneth not, and if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.) Yet if we rise again, by immediate repentance, and with full purpose of amendment of life, apply earnestly to God for mercy, and trust on his promises, on account of the merits of his Son, there is sure hope of pardon, and blotting out of trespasses, and that we shall again be received into the favour of our heavenly Father. Do we not read of David, as recorded by the Apostle, xiiiith Acts, 22d verse, *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who shall fulfil all my will* *. This is a prodigious

* We know that profane and infidel cavillers have objected to this praise of David, the foul blot in his moral character, which rendered him unworthy of such an exalted title. But a man must be worse than an idiot to suppose this could be applicable to David in a state of criminality, when he had fallen from God's protection through wilful sin, and perverse rebellion against his pure precepts; but it was strictly true of him, both before and after his great fall, in his uniform obedience to the Divine Will, and giving God the glory in every state of prosperity, as well as shewing a becoming resignation under every affliction.

praise of the disposition of David; and it is very certain, that in the *general tenor* of his conduct, as considering himself the *instrument* of God to do his pleasure in the government of his people, David uniformly observed that *humility* and *submission* that is due from the most exalted of the sons of men to the great Creator and Governor of all things. It is equally true, that he stedfastly believed the promise made to him respecting the Messiah, who was to be related to him as touching the *flesh*; and it is no less certain also, that his *faith* in God's promise had the effect of *justifying* him in God's sight, and that thereby he became interested in our Savior Jesus Christ, who was to come. Yet we read, notwithstanding this proof of his belief in God's word and power, and that he had so long stood forth distinguished by the above eminent title, and mark of God's favor, that *afterwards* he fell most horribly, committing both the foulest adultery and murder. But as soon as God shewed him completely to himself, and wrought upon his backsliding servant to confess *that he had sinned against the Lord*, opening his eyes to see the blackness of his own heart, when left to follow the evil propensities of his nature; we read that his sin was forgiven, and he was received again into favor; but not without manifest and great signs of God's displeasure at his unworthy conduct, in the particulars of his gross offence, which unavoidably continued a sore trouble to him during the remainder of his life, when the remembrance of his ingratitude excited the needful exercise of *repentance*. And there can be no manner of doubt, but that the cause of God's thus deserting him so far as to expose him to fall into such a temptation, proceeded from his error in yielding to a fit of sloth; from a presuming dependance upon his *own strength*; forbearing to employ himself in the proper exercise of his function, and to cleave unto God for help; through which

which united misconduct he fell a prey to his own carnal appetites and passions. Another example very applicable in proof of the doctrine we are now defending, is the case of St. Peter. No man I believe will doubt of this Apostle's being grafted in Christ long before the sad fall he was guilty of in denying him; that is, that he had the fullest assurance of Jesus Christ being sent from God, and that he was the *Savior of the world*. Indeed nothing can afford a stronger proof of this faith, than the answer he made to our blessed Lord both for himself and fellow apostles, when our Savior asked them, *will ye also go away? Master*, replied he, *to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the son of the living God.* John vi. 68, 69. To which may be added the positive testimony of Christ himself concerning this apostle's faith upon a like confession. *Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven;* which words do sufficiently prove, that the Apostle was *already justified*, or accepted of the Father, through this lively faith in the only begotten son of God, concerning whom he made such a public and solemn confession*. This is abundant evidence I say, that he

* *Already justified.* That is, he had a deep and lively faith that Christ was the mediator between God and man: that without *his* intercession for us salvation is *impossible* to any. This faith consequently doth so affect all possessed of it, as to keep them from committing *wilful sin*; from *contriving* it; or *continuing* in it: and it disposes us also, to look up to *him* for help, that is, for a power of living righteously, so as to please him; and to believe that being *pardoned* through the efficacy of his atonement we shall finally become partakers of the salvation he has purchased for all who obey his voice and *come unto him*. This I apprehend to be justification in *this* life. Sanctification, or reformation of our ways, as naturally flows from it, as heat and light from the sun; and by these we are preserved from *fear of the enemy*, till this body hath paid the debt of the law, when the spirit will rest in peace through the merits of Christ's all-sufficient ransom, till it receives its full degree of perfection and reward

he was completely inlisted, under Christ's banner, or in scripture phrase, *grafted* in him. Yet we know, that afterwards he *denied* his Master, in the most base and cowardly manner, although he had expressly heard from him, *Whosoever denieth me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.* It is difficult in truth, after what hath been said of this celebrated Apostle, to conceive how he could be guilty of so ungrateful and enormous a transgression, especially when he was even *cautioned* against the trespass he was so soon about to *commit*: but his *reply* to his Lord unites to confirm the truth of the prediction. He trusted *too much* to the persuasion of his *own* zeal, and was therefore suffered to fall to convince him that in *God alone* we must trust, to support our frail nature under heavy temptations. But as soon as he acknowledged his great offence, with an humble heart and weeping eyes, and with true repentance turned unto God, with sure trust in his mercy, through faith in *him* whom he had so shamefully denied: his sin was forgiven, and as a sure *mark* to him that it was so, the place of his apostleship was still *continued* to him. But attend to another (if possible) still stronger instance of backsliding. Though the same holy apostle, in company with the rest of the disciples, on Whitsunday, had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, in a more extraordinary manner than he had ever before experienced, (for the *full* influence of the blessed Spirit had not been communicated to them till Christ was glorified,) even after this, he committed no small offence in Antioch, by bringing the consciences of the faithful into *great doubt*, by his own injudi-

reward at the last day, when it shall experience the power of Christ's resurrection in its *own*, and refreshment from the presence of the Lord, by being united again to the body to live for ever with Christ.—This is the faith we must pray for, and labor to cultivate, as we value an eternal interest in the Redeemer's atonement.

cious example, so that St. Paul was constrained to *rebuke* him to his face for not *walking discretely*, and in the true way of the gospel. Have we not now had sufficient proofs of his both *belonging* to Christ, of his *falling from* him, and of his being *received again* into favor? And shall we presume to assert after these, that he is shut out from the grace and mercy of God? or that his trespasss whereby he became a stumbling block unto many, was *unpardonable*? God forbid such a sentence should escape us, or such a thought be admitted; for if this be true, what will become of the very *best* amongst us?

After all, a question of great moment may present itself to some mens minds, in consequence of this very doctrine, which is this, whether some encouragement may not be drawn from it, *that we may sin that grace may abound*. It becomes very necessary therefore, to remove all just ground for any such doubts. These examples then, all serious christians will readily perceive are not introduced to warrant any liberty to *sin*, from a bold presumption upon the future mercy of God, and of his goodness being in store for them at all events: but they are advanced merely to strengthen the hope of the contrite and returning sinner, that if through the great weakness of our fallen nature, and the subtlety of our bitter enemy united, we should happen to fall into alarming sin, yet still we should never *despair* of the tender mercy of our heavenly Father towards his penitent and sorrowing children who have taken up, and do walk cautiously, and uniformly for the time to come, in the paths of righteousness. It will likewise be of great use to check any such dangerous notions as the evil spirit and abandoned men may occasionally suggest, to keep us from repentance, to attend to the *general* character of these holy men, who have been recorded as grievous examples of backsliding, and afterwards objects of God's great loving kindness. If we had

time to dwell upon their *excellencies*, it would make the best of *us* to *blush*, and shudder at the *comparison*. Excepting these few blots, (soil as they were) if they were the brightest examples of *faith*, *obedience*, *humility*, and every valuable virtue that through the grace of God, they were capable of producing in the body. And to crown their character, and as a caution to us, both of the weakness of our common nature, when left to itself, and to hold out to us all possible *comfort* when our transgressions are ready to weigh us down, and exclude all hope, from consciousness of our deserts; they have left us the most valuable proofs of deep and effectual *repentance*, such as if we imitate, will equally reconcile us to our justly offended, but all merciful God, as it did *them*. So that very far from allowing so abominable a doctrine, that we may sin *securely*, in hopes of *final pardon*, and to prevent all such dangerous fancies to take place in our mind, it will be useful, very frequently, to *examine* ourselves, whether we can bear any *comparison* with these bright saints in *other* respects of duty, and whether *our* transgressions are not mostly *wilful*; not *single*, and *fully repented* of, (by thorough reformation and utter *hatred* of our past crimes) but continually *repeated*, fondly *indulged*, and too often wickedly defended, or attempted to be lessened by the most frivolous excuses? But as a still more powerful dissuasive against errors of *this* kind, it will greatly assist our diligence and discretion to consider that repentance *itself* is the *gift* of God; and to beware that we in no shape encourage a thought that we are able truly to repent, and turn effectually to the Lord, by our own will, might, and strength, whenever we *please* *. For this de-

* That is, to continue wilfully sinning, and encouraging a design of repenting *hereafter* at the same time. This is a contradiction, and inconsistent with the least pretension to pure religion,

claration of our Savior himself must be clear to every man; that knoweth his own heart and depraved nature, viz. *That without him we do nothing*, in a pure christian sense, John xv. 5. Again we are told by the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *That of ourselves we are not able to think a good thought, but that your sufficiency is of God.* And in another place, Phila. ii. 13. *He declares, that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* And that men might not be deceived by a single expression, the prophet Jeremiah, though he had before said, *If thou return, O Israel, return unto me, saith the Lord,* (ch. iv. 1.) yet he afterwards adds, xxxix. 18. *Turn thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.* And it is the opinion of the foudest of the first fathers of the church, (especially St. Ambrose) that the turning of the heart to God must be the work of God, as the Lord himself doth testify by his prophet in these plain words: *And I will give thee a heart to know me; that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people; and I will be their God, for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.* Jer. xxiv. 7. So that nothing now remains to conclude this part of the subject, but to enquire how we may prevail upon God to do in us, and for us, what we must plainly see and feel, we cannot effect by our own mere ability; and at the same time, not to destroy the exercise of that freedom of choice with which it is certain God created both angels and men, or they could not with any truth be said to *destroy themselves by their own inventions.* These things then being considered, how can we decide the matter

* This will be the language of every truly awakened penitent, who will soon perceive his lack of power to produce *genuine repentance*; when duly convinced of the deadly nature, and deceitfulness of sin, the weakness of his own nature will urge him to apply for help to climb the rugged rock of repentance, and to support him in that arduous, but needful warfare,

better,

better, than in the words of Christ himself, for whose sake alone we shall have any favor shewn us. *Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.* Here is a manifest CONDITION held out, whereby we may hope to obtain the gift of repentance, as well as of every other needful grace. No person, at least no believer, will pretend to say, he is dead to any sense of the necessity of divine assistance. The light of our own reason and inward conscience, (those general gifts to men) strengthened by revelation, lead us to a different decision, and carry us thus far on the way; and by using this light and increase of grace as we ought, God will vouchsafe us more grace. *He will work in us both to will and to do still greater things, as our case requires.* It is therefore both our interest and duty, earnestly and continually to pray unto the ever living God our heavenly Father, that he will vouchsafe us his Holy Spirit, to stir up a pure and unfeigned repentance in our hearts, that after the painful toils and manifold vexations of this life, we may dwell eternally with his Son Jesus Christ, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, both to help and reward those who humbly trust in him; and to whom therefore, as is most due, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE XXV.

SECOND PART.

Homily on Repentance continued.

Same Text.

THIS being a subject of all others, of the greatest consequence to the eternal interests of mankind, it is impossible to be too full, or clear in the management of it. But as it concerns, in an essential degree, the peace of the most miserable description of mankind, the *doubting* and the *desponding* sinner (both here and hereafter) it will be proper to dwell minutely upon every particular it presents, as expedient for their information and comfort.

In the two former parts of this discourse upon repentance, you have had very plainly proved to you, how positively necessary this doctrine is to all men, especially the unconverted*, and how earn-

* In truth, our whole life requires to be influenced by this grace: for as the very *best*, do continually offend in some degree, it is necessary they should daily be *renewed by repentance*. And if profitable to experienced christians, it must be still more highly expedient for those who may be said to be walking in the shadow of death; upon this principle, that *unless we repent, we shall all likewise perish*.

effectly God urgeth it throughout the scriptures, by the mouth of his Prophets; no less than by our Savior Christ, and his Apostles. And because it consists in the conversion, or turning again, of the whole man unto God, from whom we are departed through sin, forcing him thereby to forsake us; therefore four essential points have been explained to you, viz. 1. From what things we must return. 2. Unto whom we must return. 3. By whose means alone, it can be done, in order to render it effectual. And 4. in what manner we should go about it, in order that it may prove really profitable, and that we may attain the end we have in view by it. Further, it hath also been shewn you, that as the opinion of those who deny the benefit of repentance to such as fall into any grievous offence, after they have tasted the grace of God through Jesus Christ, is equally false and dangerous; so it is proper, we should beware not to encourage a thought that we are able of ourselves, or by our own mere power to return unto the Lord our God whenever we please, after we have wilfully and perversely provoked him by our manifold sins and wickedness; for this would be as dangerous an error as the former, in that it would be giving a licence to offend upon a wicked and misgrounded presumption; that we could repair the mischief at any time.

It remains now for your further instruction on this most important subject, that you should be informed of how many parts this grace of repentance doth consist. And what great cause there is to move us to repent without loss of time.

Repentance then, in the true sense of the word (as before observed) is a sincere conversion or turning unto God*, whereby men entirely forsake their

* It may also very properly be termed a returning unto God; because in fact, all mankind, through the degeneracy of their nature, are departed from the upright state in which God at first created them, and therefore must be considered as turned from him, but by repentance they are said to return into the way appointed, in order to receive his favor.

evil

evil courses, and with a lively faith *receive, love,* and worship the true living God only, by devoting themselves to all manner of good works, which God's word declares to be acceptable to him. But for the easier instruction of the most unlearned and ignorant, it may be useful to divide repentance into four parts, steps, or degrees, which being regularly placed in order, may be compared to a short ladder, whereby men may climb from the bottomless pit of destruction (into which we are daily hurrying ourselves by our continual and grievous offences) up to the castle of eternal salvation. The *first* step then, to this blessed mansion is CONTRITION, *or true sorrow of heart.* We must be wounded in the most sensible manner for our sins; and we must constantly, and unfeignedly lament, that we have so grievously offended our most bountiful and merciful God, who loved us so tenderly, as to suffer his only begotten Son *to die* a most cruel death, and shed his most precious blood for our redemption and deliverance. Now if this inward grief for our manifold trespasses and ungrateful conduct, proceeds really from the *heart*, and affords undeniable proof of its *sincerity*; the holy Prophet doth assure us, that it is a pleasing sacrifice to God. *The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit, a contrite and broken heart* O God, *thou wilt not despise.* But how to soften, and break this hard and stubborn heart, is the question, since we are told it is not only *desperately wicked* by nature, but *deceitful above all things.* In order to this, (as both reason and conscience informs us) when we pray, we must pray to experience a *real concern* for having thus offended God. And whenever we feel any thing approaching this penitent concern, by whatever accident, or instrument this blessed work takes place, we must humbly and gratefully attribute it to the permission or tender mercy of the Lord, who alone can touch the heart so as to produce *any real change* of life. And

another thing we should observe, as being particularly calculated to bring about this very work, is to give diligence in reading the holy Scriptures, and in constantly attending at God's house, where we have the word of God explained to us, for in them our natural corruption, and ingratitude, and the great danger of a sinful life are so strongly painted, as to alarm, and to prevent men from going on in their wickedness. Every one must be sensible, that if we have not a thorough *feeling* of our sins, it is impossible we can be truly *sorry* for them. And this is very clear from the case of king David himself. Before he heard the word of the Lord by the mouth of the Prophet Nathan, he shewed no concern for the foul adultery and murder he had committed*. And why? Because he was wholly devoted to the indulgence of his filthy and carnal appetites. He had forsaken God by this base preference, and the Lord had so far deserted him, as to let him fall from righteousness. And he might truly be said to have slept in his own sins, had not God out of tender compassion for the deplorable case of his servant, (who was in danger of *continuing* in his polluted courses) sent his holy Prophet to rouse and *sting* his heart, that he might recover from his sinful lethargy, and return to the right way. We also read in Acts iv. that when the people heard St. Peter's sermon in which he attacked their particular trespasses *so strongly, they were pricked in their hearts*. Now that would not have happened at that time, if that saving discourse had not been delivered to them†. And thus

re-
 * His reason was blinded by pride, vanity, and lust, and his conscience seared as with a hot iron, so as to let neither of them assist in checking him in his evil designs. In short, he had no longer the fear of God before his eyes, and when that is the case, men are hurried into the commission of the foulest transgressions by the force of their inordinate appetites and violent passions.

† And this proves the great use of *coming to church*, and the benefit people *might* receive from the instruction and good will of their pastor

respecting all who have no inclination either to read, or to hear God's word, (which affords innumerable sermons of this kind) there is but small hope that they will so much as set their feet upon, or lay hold of the *first* step of this ladder, which would help to raise them out of the mire of their sins. On the contrary, they sink deeper and deeper, every step they proceed in wickedness, till they find themselves irretrievably lost in the bottomless pit of destruction. For all such people, when by the sting of their natural conscience accusing them, (which bites very sharply till hardened by offending) they feel an inward sorrow for their wicked lives; yet not having the benefit of God's word to comfort them, and help their inward light of the Lord in their own breasts, but continuing to despise both *that*, and every other blessed means that is appointed for their recovery and salvation; the burden of an accusing conscience will often lead them to utter despair, through ignorance of the salvation held out to them in God's word, which is most graciously given to assist and improve this faithful monitor implanted in the human mind; and then at length they become callous and reprobate.

A *second* part of repentance, or *another* step towards raising us above the dangers that surround us, is a full and unfeigned *confession* of our sins before God, whom most of us have so grievously offended, that if he should deal with us according to *strict justice*, we certainly deserve the worst place in the regions of darkness. Yet doth this long-suffering, and most merciful Being declare by the mouth of his prophets, that if we acknowledge our misdeeds with a truly penitent heart
pastor towards them, if not their *own* fault; in that they are the instruments of God's love and mercy towards them, to teach them their duty, and to warn and exhort them not to persist in their evil courses.

before him, he will freely forgive them, and even blot out our transgressions and sins from the sight of his all pure, and all-seeing eye. In this strain also doth the holy David speak. *I will acknowledge my sins unto thee O Lord, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid. I said I will confess my sins unto the Lord,* and so thou forgavest *the wickedness of my sin.* And the same comfortable hope is held out by St. John to the humble and contrite. *If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now this, it must be noticed, is to be understood only of the confession that is expressly necessary to be made to God. For as one of the Fathers (St. Augustin) affirms, the confession that is made to God, is required of us by God's law, and he quotes the above passage of St. John to prove it, and observes further, that *without* this confession, sin will not be forgiven. This then, is the principal, or only essential, and indispensable confession that we are commanded to make by the authority of Scripture, which is God's word. It is true, there is also another kind of confession which is occasionally both needful and profitable, and of which St. James speaks as follows, (v. 16.) *Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed.* Or in other words, discover that which causeth uneasiness to your soul, that a remedy may be sought after. And it is recommended both to him who confesseth, and him who heareth, that each should *mutually* discover his inward sorrow. The true meaning of this precept is, that religiously disposed people ought to confess all such failings, and offences as may have given *rise* to hatred, envy, or malice, towards any of their brethren, in order that a friendly reconciliation may take place, for without this, as our Savior Jesus Christ assures us in the following text, our confession will be ineffectual. He commands us therefore, Matt. v. 23. to conduct our-
selves

selves as follows: *When thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* The injunction of the Apostle therefore, in the matter of *confession*, may also be received in another good sense, viz. that we ought to confess our weakness and failings to each other, in order that becoming sensible of the many infirmities common to our nature, we may increase in charity and brotherly love, and be led more earnestly to pray together to Almighty God our heavenly Father, that the will of his great goodness, vouchsafed to pardon our infirmities for the sake of his dear Son Jesus Christ, and not charge them against us, when he shall render to every one according to his works.

Now it being well known, that they of the Romish persuasion catch at this passage of St. James, and endeavour to *wrest* it in defence of their ceremony of *auricular confession*, (that is the private declaration of their inmost sins in the ear of the priest, who pretends authority and power to *absolve* them) it may be proper in this place, to shew you, that they greatly deceive themselves, and mislead others by such assertions. For it is very clear, that if this text is to be understood, as establishing *auricular confession*, then the *priests* are equally bound by it, to confess themselves to the laity, as the people are to *them*, for the injunction is *general* and not limited; *confess to ONE ANOTHER, and pray for ONE ANOTHER*, and if barely and simply to *pray*, can possibly be construed as meaning to *absolve*, then also the laity have as good authority from this passage to absolve the *priests*, as the *priests* have to absolve the *people*. A learned, and laborious writer, (John Scotus, commonly called Duns), speaketh as follows upon the point before us. It doth by no means appear to me, says he, that St. James delivers

delivers a commandant of any such implication, as is here alluded to, or that he published any such thing, as being Christ's *intention*, or by his command. For first, when did he receive authority to bind the *whole* church, (since he was only bishop or overseer of the church of Jerusalem) unless it should be affirmed that *that* church being at the beginning the *head* church, consequently he was the *head* bishop, which thing we know the see of Rome will never grant. The plain meaning therefore, of the Apostle's words, *Confess your sins one to another*, must be considered as an exhortation to universal *humility*, whereby he wisheth us to confess ourselves in a general manner to our neighbours, with whom we may be on such a footing of christian familiarity, as to discourse freely upon the most serious topics. We are to confess ourselves mutually in this sense, and upon the principle of this saying of St. John, *That if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* He means it as a *preventive* from any being puffed up by the appearance of superior merit, and that all might acknowledge their great unworthiness, and give the glory to God, both for the grace we receive to become better, and due praise for the remission of the punishment the best of us deserve. Further, when the advocates for this unscriptural ceremony, advance this saying of our blessed Lord to the leper, to prove that auricular confession is grounded on the *word of God*, viz. *Go thy way and shew thyself to the priest.* (Matt. viii.) it is very strange, they cannot perceive that the leper was cleansed *before* Christ commanded him to shew himself to the priest. And as to the sense of *showing* himself, the rites of the Levitical law will abundantly clear the passage from having any such meaning, as *they* would force upon it. By the same reason, we must be cleansed from our *spiritual* leprosy, (I mean our sins must be forgiven) before

before we proceed to confession*. And it is therefore evident that we have no need to tell our sins to the priest, (for the purpose of *absolution*) since they are already forgiven (through the merits and mediation of Christ) by the grace of hearty contrition, and readiness to confess them. St. Ambrose in his second sermon upon the cxxxix Psalm, speaks very clearly, and closely, on this subject, Go, shew thyself, says he, to the *priest*, that is, to the *TRUE Priest*. To Him who is the *Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedeck*†. Hence it is plain, that holy father understood, that both the priesthood and the law being changed, we ought to acknowledge no *other* priest to have power to deliver us from sin, or speak peace to our souls, but our *Savior Jesus Christ*, who being the chief Bishop of our souls, did by the sacrifice of his body and blood, once offered for us on the altar of the cross, most effectually cleanse our spiritual leprosy, and wash away the sins of all those who with hearty confession, and pure desire of amendment, repair unto him for help. But it is past all dispute, that this *auricular* confession had no warrant of God's word, otherwise it would not have been lawful for Nectorius, bishop

* Before we can with propriety make our bounden offers of grateful praise, (as is represented in the type of the recovered leper), we must be in some degree sensible, that the foulness of our sins will be forgiven on our sincere repentance, and prayers for pardon, otherwise we should not be able to offer a hearty thanksgiving for the mercy. For if the leper had not found himself *clean*, the ceremony of *showing* himself to the priest, and making an *offering*, would have been most vain and useless. By this passage therefore, must be understood that we *have* obtained that portion of grace, that is, such faith in God's promises of forgiveness of sins *through Christ*, or we cannot duly confess our unworthiness of favor. In other words, there must be an efficient application of the power of Christ's redemption to the creature, (a regenerating influence upon the mind) before he will be able to perceive the thorough impurity of his own nature, or be qualified to make any *valuable* confession.

† The priest in the law was a type or sign of this true Priest, who alone can absolve or cleanse from sin.

of Constantinople, to have alleged his reasons for abolishing the use of it: because, though any thing ordained of God should happen to be *abused* through the wickedness of men, it does not follow, that the appointment should be *set aside* on that account, but only that the abuse of it should be *rectified*, and the rite remain. St. Augustin's words on this subject are very remarkable. To what purpose, says he, should I confess to men, unless they were able to heal the disorders of my frail nature? It is truly singular, that men should be so generally acquainted with the failings common to all, and yet be so slow to correct and reform *themselves*. Why should they desire to hear the confession of *my* infirmities, who will not bear to hear from *others*, how faulty they are *themselves*? And how can they tell from what they hear only from *me*, whether I relate the truth, since no man knoweth what is in man, but the spirit of man that is in him? It is very unlikely St. Augustin would have written thus, if auricular confession had been treated with any respect in his time. Let us not then mislead our consciences with any such ill-founded and vain doctrines. Let us with fear and trembling, and a truly contrite heart, use *that* kind of confession which God hath commanded in his word, and then doubtless, as *He is faithful and just*, *He will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. At the same time, we by no means pretend to deny, but that if any find themselves deeply afflicted, or perplexed in mind, either through soreness of conscience, or ignorance of God's word and promises; it may afford them much relief and profit, to apply to their proper minister, whether parson, or curate, or to any other religious, and well-informed person, for the desirable purpose of removing the doubts, and difficulties which may oppress them; but it is strictly contrary to true christian liberty, that any man should be *bound* to the numbering or disclosing his
sins

sins to any one but God himself, who alone can forgive them, and bestow a power to reform them. This, it is true, was an usage formerly practised among us, in times of extreme blindness, and ignorance, but all such errors are now rooted out from the church to which we happily belong *.

The next step by which the sinner may rise still higher out of the sink of his polluted courses, or the third part of repentance, is FAITH; by which we receive and make sure to ourselves those precious promises of God concerning the free pardon of sin †; the seal or pledges of which hope, are no less

* I should have judged it needless to insert this part of the Homily, upon so exceptionable a practice, and which has no place in our church; but that her enemies do still most unwarrantably attach the principles of Popery to the constitution; and, as this particular point is so closely argued; its impropriety so strongly reprobated in the Homily; and withal, so much excellent matter contained in the refutation, it may prove instrumental to the conviction of any, who have been prejudiced against the purity of our church doctrines, or have any doubt of her perfect reformation from such dangerous errors.

† The doctrine of free grace is as essential to the comforts of a real christian, as the belief of a superintending Being is necessary to account (with a sound philosopher) for the wonders of nature that illude his search. It is astonishing, indeed, how persons, capable of exercising the thinking faculty to any extent, can doubt of it for a moment, or inconsiderately ascribe to merit in the creature, what alone can be the effect of infinite mercy in the Creator. To merit or deserve any benefit, implies a return induced by justice in the person conferring favor. Thus we truly say, a brave soldier, or a loyal subject deserves well of his prince, or country. Here something is done previously, independent of the power of another. But in the case of man towards his Maker, the matter is totally different, for as he is indebted for the very power that enables him to act, how is it possible he can attach an obligation on the author of it, to reward? As the cause of man's original existence is of God's free act alone, the gifts he received must consequently be equally free on God's part; and if through his own error, and abuse of the gifts, he hath lost the advantages they promised to produce, can it be an act of grace, or favor, less free, to pardon the trespass; to renew the power of correcting the will, and to confer the originally intended blessing? The end of free grace is clearly pardon of past sin, and needful help in future; for before the remission of the offence,

less than the sufferings and death of his beloved Son Jesus Christ. It would do us no good to be ~~sorry~~ for our sins, to lament ever so grievously that we have offended our bountiful and merciful Father, or to confess our manifold trespasses ever so earnestly, unless we possess a *firm belief*, and persuasion, that God, for his Son Jesus Christ's sake, will forgive us our sins, and blot out the remembrance of them for ever. To teach repentance, therefore, without a *lively faith* in Christ, which alone, in the very nature of things, and the spirit

essence, through the *promise*, the offender was *incapable* of return. In his forsaken state, he was only inclined to *hide* himself, from a consciousness of the penalty he had incurred. Grace, then, is most manifestly *free*, since it was designed to be given before the worlds were made; and upon the *fall* of man, so far from *meriting*, he had positively lost the very power of *soliciting* it. Man, in his present nature (devoid of grace), is a *rebel* against God; and, as in the case of *all* rebels, though *life* is granted by the sovereign, on condition of future *fidelity* to him, yet their first estate is forfeited to the justice of the law. And thus, the creature, being no longer innocent, became subject to the miseries of an imperfect nature. Pardon, therefore, or the gift of *life*, and the *trial* for future *reformation*, are evidently *free* in both cases. In short, the salvation of mankind by the *free grace* of God, through (or for the *sake* of) Jesus Christ, is an article of *faith essential* to the obtaining eternal life, in all who profess *Christianity*. It is as *free* as the will of the Deity, which cannot be subject to control; preordained and provided as an all-sufficient remedy against the malice of the tempter, and the frailty of the creature. It is contradictory in the nature of things, for imperfection to *merit* of perfection; and therefore all the glory of the work is due to God in Christ, whose perfect nature rendered him *mighty to save*. And as all this world lieth in sin and imperfection, consequently the restoration or recovery of it to any degree of purity, must be as *free* in its *design*, as the method is complete in infinite wisdom. As to the *why*, and the *wherefore* (that vain philosophy may suggest), God did not prevent the entrance of evil into nature, such inquiries are so opposite to that *humility* which constitutes an *essential* part of *grace*, and which best becomes sinful dust and ashes, that I forbear saying more on the subject, than that the goodness of God is highly magnified in providing redemption for a fallen race; and since all that the creature can justly be said to *merit*, is God's displeasure; it surely demonstrates unbounded mercy to bestow *free grace*, when *punishment* only, could be expected.

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of revelation, can warrant its acceptance with an *all-perfect Being*, is to teach *such* a repentance as even the traitor Judas shewed. *Such* a repentance may be supposed *sufficient* by the unenlightened, or in the school of mere human science; but that of the *gospel* is of a very different nature. The former is supposed to consist of only three parts; 1. Contrition of heart; 2. Confession of *mouth*; and 3. The satisfaction of the work. Now to prove that this kind of repentance is very *deficient*, and will never profit of itself to the saving of the soul, I shall shew you clearly, that all these parts are to be found in the repentance of *Judas Iscariot*, and which in truth as far as mere *outward appearance* went, exceeded even that of *St. Peter*. For, 1st, we read in the *gospel* account of it, that Judas was *exceeding* sorrowful, and dejected; nay, that he was overwhelmed with such an anguish of mind, for what he had done, that his life was a *burden* to him; he could not bear it any longer. 2d. Before he destroyed himself, he made a full and public confession of his crime, in these words: *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood*. And in truth, this was a very *bold* confession, which might have involved him into the greatest trouble, for thereby it is evident he charged the high priests and the elders also with *shedding of innocent blood*, and of course branded them as *most abominable murderers*. 3d. He likewise made a kind of *satisfaction* (that is, all that remained in his power), by throwing down the money to them again. So far then every part of *his* repentance exactly agrees with *that* description of a penitent, which is abovementioned. But surely any *real christian* must perceive, that it wanted *that*, without which the penitent could receive no consolation from all the rest; that is, the hope of pardon by faith in *HIM*, who is able to save

save to the uttermost all who *trust* in Him; this Judas could not do; this he evidently *wanted*, and therefore his repentance *availed him nought*: he could find nothing to balance this declaration: *It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.* As to the *outward* marks of remorse indeed, they were much stronger, (as before observed,) than we read of St. Peter. For although the latter had committed a *very foul crime* in DENYING his Lord and Master, we read that he only went out, and *wept*. He fell through human weakness, depending wholly to his *own* virtue (for he seemed *confident* before he was *tried*, that he should never be guilty of such base ingratitude) but the other sinned through *premeditated villainy*, and cruelty, urged by the vilest principle that human nature is prone to, *COVETOUS* and *GREEDY* views.

One of the fathers, (St. Ambrose) speaks thus of St. Peter's case. Peter was sorry, and wept, because he erred as a weak man, but Judas (he might have added) sinned as a devil. I do not find, says this holy father, what St. Peter *said*, we know that he wept, for we read of his *tears*, but not of his *satisfaction*; for no *sufficient* satisfaction could be made for such an offence, by one become an object of *free mercy*. The question then which here presents itself, is how the one happened to be received into favour again with God, and the other *utterly rejected*. The answer can be no other, than that Peter, by a lively faith in *him* whom he *denied*, applied through HIM to the mercy of God, and Judas, being *void of faith*, did naturally *despair* of God's goodness and mercy. And hence it is evident, that though we may be earnestly *sorry* for our sins, and *confess* them both *fully* and *heartily*, yet that *ALONE*, will rather lead us to *despair*, as it does not amount to any *proper* degree of *satisfaction*, but when convinced of our *utter inability*

ability of satisfying ourselves by any thing we can do, and having an humble, but firm, faith in the *all-sufficient satisfaction* made by HIM, who called us to repent; and *turn unto him*, then *hope* takes birth in the soul, for otherwise we still remain liable to punishment. From all that has been said then, it is very clear, that what is *further* required to *perfect* our repentance, is a *stedfast faith* in the promise of God, our heavenly Father, that he will, for his *Son Jesus Christ's sake*, blot out the handwriting that is against us, and pardon our offences, transgression, and sins. And if so, then consequently, as before observed, repentance, *without* faith in Christ's merits and mediation, and the free mercy of God, on account of his atonement, is at best only *such* a repentance as Cain and Judas were capable of shewing. And this naturally leads to the *fourth* and last step, and which affords an undeniable *proof* of our having obtained both pardon and grace to uphold us in future, I mean *amendment of life*, or in scripture language, *bringing forth fruits meet for repentance*.

When we are arrived to *this* step of the ladder, we look down on our former courses with *shame*, *fear*, and *sorrow*. They who do *truly* repent, must be quite altered in their habits, they in a manner become *new creatures*. They can no longer be the same they were before. This made St. John the Baptist speak as follows to the Pharisees and Saducees, that came to *his baptism*: *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come, bring forth therefore fruits MEET for repentance*. By which we are taught, that if we escape the punishment due to our sins from *Him* we so highly offend, we must not play the hypocrite as these Pharisees and Saducees did, by shewing a zeal for any *outward* forms, without using them as the *means* to *inward* purity, but that it is necessary to turn to
God

God by true repentance, which is known and proved by the sure *signs* of *good fruits* or *change of life*.

All therefore who, from the bottom of their hearts, confess their sins, and are unfeignedly sorry for them, will lay aside all dissimulation, and put on *true humility* and lowliness of mind. They will not only own their want of a physician for their souls, but most earnestly call upon him *to help them*. They will not only keep from the sins of their former life, and all filthy vices, but they will fly from, avoid, and abhor every thing that is likely *to lead them into temptation*. And as they did before give way to all manner of impiety, and wicked courses, so now, that they have seen their error and danger, and the mercy of God in sparing them to repent and redeem the time, they will as diligently pursue all purity and holiness of life; they will strive to pass the remainder of their days in innocency, and grateful obedience to his laws, and a constant attendance on his holy worship, as the *means* to improve them in all christian virtues, and prepare them for the kingdom of heaven when they die.

These *four* parts of repentance having been so fully explained to you, as representing so many regular steps by which we may remove ourselves from the dangers of this life, and lay the foundation for eternal happiness; it will be proper now to furnish some *instances* of this essential truth, that *amendment of life* is *positively necessary* to shew that our repentance will do us *any good*.

First then, we have the case of the Ninevites as an example in proof of this truth. For we read in the *iii*d chapter of Jonah, that at the preaching of Jonah to them, they did not only proclaim a general fast, and order that every one should put on sackcloth, but they did *all turn from their evil ways*,
and

and the wickedness they had been accustomed to practice. Another example, and no less remarkable of positive amendment in the habitual sinner, is strongly represented to us in the case of Zaccheus, for when he came to our Saviour, he addressed him in these words, *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have defrauded any man, at taken ought from him by extortion or fraud, I restore him four fold.* By which we perceive, that the repentance of his former course of life had wrought an *actual change* in him. He was so far from continuing in insatiable covetousness, and from desiring to use any injustice towards others, that on the contrary, he was most willing to part from his *own*, and to make every *satisfaction* for what injury he might formerly have committed to others. Upon which our blessed Lord declares, *This day is salvation come to thine house, that is,* plainly meaning, because thy repentance hath brought forth *amendment of life.*

Attend further to another instance of effectual repentance being established by *manifest reformation.* It is that moving story of the sinful woman, as recorded in the viith of St. Luke, who hearing where our Saviour Christ was to be found, and being melted with his discourse, so as to produce the *heartiest remorse* for her former *evil life*, could not refrain weeping at his feet, as she knelt in humble posture near him, and marvelled at the mercy of her deliverer. Those eyes, which had often allured so many to sin, were now clouded through the effects of *sorrowing penitence!* And observing that her tears had fallen upon her gracious Master, she wiped his feet with the hair which was flowing about her shoulders, after the manner of mourners in those days, and which before was used to be adorned and plaited, as a *snare to vice.* From all these instances, we are plainly taught what *manner* of re-

turns God requires from us, viz. *to cease from evil, and to do good*; and if we have done any one wrong, to endeavour to make them all the amends in our power, in imitation of this reformed publican, and the repenting harlot; and according to the wholesome lesson of St. John the Baptist, to them who consulted him: for we know that the penance which Christ himself enjoined to sinners, was, *Go thy way and sin no more*. But this command we shall never be able to fulfil, unless we obtain his grace and help, who no less plainly tells us, *without me ye can do nothing*. How then are we to procure this power? Why it behoves us, if we are in the least concerned for the salvation of our souls, most earnestly to *pray to our heavenly Father, to assist us with his Holy Spirit*. For this cause hath he published his gospel, and appointed his ministers to preach it, that ye might know the *only way* to life eternal, and be enabled to hearken to the voice of the true shepherd, and with due obedience follow his precepts and example. Let us listen, then, to the voice of the Lord which calleth us to repentance, by purifying our lives, and opening our eyes, to see our danger, without a Redeemer. Let us not harden our hearts by neglecting the gracious means afforded us for that blessed end, as those unbelievers do, who abuse the time afforded them by God to repent, and employ it in indulging their pride, and slighting both God, and the men he has sent forth as instruments to bring them to a right sense of their condition by nature, and without grace. Who unhappily are not sensible how heavily they increase God's displeasure against them, by the hardness of their hearts, so that at last they are not able to repent, but *heap to themselves wrath against the dreadful day of judgment*, and retribution.

In whatsoever shape or degree we have broken the law of God, let us repent of having strayed from

the protection of so good a Lord. Let us confess our great unworthiness before him, but still let us trust in his *mercy*, through *Christ*, for pardon of our transgressions. And let us strive vigorously for the time to come (through God's help) to walk in *newness of life* as new born babes; that so we may glorify, by our lives, our Father who is in heaven, and have our conscience cleansed by this good proof of our faith, so that at last we may obtain the enjoyment of everlasting life, through the merits of our blessed Savior; to whom be all praise and honor for ever and ever. Amen.

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Explained to you

By shewing you that it consists of a deep sorrow of heart for our sins in general.

God * In an unassigned confession with our lips, of
our great unworthiness, to receive any favor of

3. In a fictitious and untrue statement, and
and, no way for action;

4. An earnest resolution in ourselves, from a conviction of the necessity of reformation, to renounce by God's grace, our former wicked courses, and to

And therefore the work of man's redemption, consisting in justification, and sanctification; that is, his forgiveness and his regeneration, and the power of acting righteously, ought to be considered as proceeding entirely from the free grace of God, through the merits of Christ, towards the creature.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

Third Part of the Homily on Repentance.

Same Text.

HAVING now had the several, and true parts of this serious work of repentance most fully explained to you,

1. By shewing you that it consists of a deep sorrow of heart for our sins in general.

2. In an unfeigned *confession* with our lips, of our great unworthiness to receive *any* favor of God*.

3. In a stedfast faith, and trust, in our Savior's merits for pardon; and,

4. An earnest resolution in ourselves, from a *conviction* of the necessity of reformation, to renounce, by God's grace, our former wicked courses, and to

* And therefore the *whole* of man's redemption, consisting of his justification, and sanctification; that is, his forgiveness and acceptance, and the power of acting righteously, ought to be considered as proceeding entirely from the *free* grace of God, through Jesus Christ, towards the creature,

turn unto God by a new life, to the glory of his name; to conduct ourselves peaceably, and charitably towards our neighbors, and to live soberly and modestly in our persons, in all temperance, both in word and deed, keeping under the body, that it tempt not to carnal lusts and appetites.— The positive necessity and profit of all these points having been so clearly proved, we come in the *last* place to consider some of the *causes* and *reasons* which should urge us all to an earnest and speedy repentance.

And the first that presents itself, is God's express *command*; who, in many parts of scripture, so earnestly exhorts us to *return to him*. O ye children of Israel (saith he, *Isaiah xxxi. 6.*), *turn ye unto him from whom ye have deeply revolted*. Again, in *Ezekiel xxxiii. 11*, *Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die O house of Israel*. And in another place he speaks thus, by his Prophet *Hoshea (xivth 1)*, *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity*. Therefore when any of you are so happy as to feel inclined to turn unto the Lord your God, address him in these words: O Lord, do thou take away all our iniquity, and receive us graciously; do thou afford us thy grace and help, and so will we offer the calves (or fruits) of our lips unto thee; that is, the truest sacrifice that the faithful can offer, is *thanks and praise*, (*Heb. xiii. 15.*) In all these passages you see God's direct precept is that we should *return to him*; and this should engage us to be more cautious of our ways, lest having already most highly provoked the Almighty, through our manifold and great transgressions, by continuing to slight the most gracious invitations, we may be unhappily found to *increase* our offence, and so heap still heavier punishment on our own heads, by such perverseness, and wilful trespass. If, through the depravity of our nature, we have (before conviction of our unworthiness) deserved

deserved by our misdeeds, to be for ever shut out of God's glorious kingdom, how much more must we judge ourselves worthy of eternal punishment, if upon such merciful calls *after* our rebellion, if upon such solemn *commands* to return again to our duty, we still continue to shut our ears, and harden our hearts, and will in no degree listen to the voice of our heavenly Father, but walk still in the perverseness of our own will?

The *second* cause that should engage us to a speedy repentance, is the comfort of this most gracious promise, which God, out of pure mercy, hath added to the above command: for he not only saith *return unto me O Israel*, but he also declares (Jer. iv.), if *thou wilt return, and put all thine abominations out of my sight*, that is, if thou wilt reform thy ways, *thou shalt never be moved*; in other words, I will afford thee power to keep thy good resolutions, or in the language of Christ, by the mouth of his apostle, *my grace shall be sufficient for thee*. Again, we have this *farther* consolation held out to us in the xviiiith chapter and 27th verse of the Prophet Ezekiel, *When the wicked turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive*. When a sinner repenteth him of his sins, from the bottom of his heart, I will put all his wickedness out of my remembrance (saith the Lord) so that they shall no more be thought upon. Thus are we abundantly instructed, that God will never fail in his promises, *freely to pardon and blot out all our sins*, so that they shall never rise up against us, if through hope in his holy word, and by stedfastly keeping his commandments, we prove our *unfeigned desire* of returning to him.

The *third* cause that should prevail upon us to set about a hearty repentance, is the *baseness* and *filthiness* of sin; the nature of which is so hateful to God, that as long as we remain *wilfully* therein,

God cannot possibly take any pleasure in us. *The prayers of the wicked* (that is the stubborn, and wilful offender) *are an abomination to the Lord*, nor can we entertain the least hope or expectation of being made partakers of the purity of heaven, and of an inheritance with the saints of light, while we *continue* to corrupt our souls, and forbear all means of advancing in godliness while on earth; for *this* is the day of trial, and in whatever state we die, in that we shall remain for ever; *for the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.* And this must necessarily be the case, because nothing impure can enter into that place, where infinite perfection delighteth to dwell. Now this happiness we shall never enjoy, but by forsaking our sins; turning to God with an upright heart, and depending on his mercy, through faith in the blood of his Son Jesus Christ. The application of a plain comparison, may be of use to render this matter clear to you. If any of you were to be sent for by an earthly prince, you must be very sensible you could not approach him, without great offence, unless you made yourselves becomingly clean to enter his presence. We must confess, that we should spare *no pains* in removing any thing about us that might be in the least degree objectionable on such an occasion. How much more then ought we to use all diligence, and speed, to put away the uncleanness of sin, that doth necessarily separate us from our God, and cause him to hide his face from us. And surely, no stronger proof can be given of the hatefulnes of sin, and of its power to destroy us for ever, than that it required the sacrifice of the all-pure and only begotten Son of God to do away its effects. That no *other* means was found for that purpose, is an argument both of the *all-sufficiency* of the *means*, and that no other could have answered the blessed end. This serious

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consideration should have a powerful influence in making us abhor a thing so extremely hateful and dangerous, and earnestly avoid what cost no less than the blood of our Savior Christ to cleanse us from it*. A certain wise heathen (Plato) says, that if virtue could be seen with mortal eyes, all men would be wonderfully influenced with the love of it. In like manner if we could with our bodily sight behold sin in its *true colours*, and the dreadful and unavoidable *consequence* to all who follow it, even for ever and ever; we should not be able to endure it, but fly from it as an immediate and deadly poison, as it really is. This however we are told by the word of him who cannot lie; and if our faith was what it should be, we should be as convinced of it as if we saw it in all its future horrors before our eyes. All do so who are blessed with the grace of God to believe the truth; and all might experience this happy gift, if they did not resist the motions of God's spirit, which *will not always strive with men*; if they did but obey the first dictates of that conscience the Lord hath implanted in the breasts of all, and close with the *means* he has appointed to draw men from misery past utterance to happiness beyond conception. *Another* plain application may be useful here. Do we not see in daily experience, that when men have committed some very disgraceful action, if it is discovered, or if they happen to be struck with a true sense of its *baseness*, they are so ashamed (their own conscience sitting in judgment on the vileness of the deed,) that they scarce dare look any man in the face. Much less then will they be able to stand in the *dread presence* of our all *perfect* God, covered with the multitude of their foul iniquities.

* This is a strong argument, by the way, to persuade people to come to that holy ordinance which Christ has appointed as our blessed means to enable us to conquer our sins, and shew our love to him.

The *fourth* cause that should hasten our true repentance, is the great *uncertainty* of our lives. This we all know to be so true, that we cannot assure an hour or even a *moment*. The issues of life and death are in the hand of the Lord; and we know not in what hour the Lord will come, that is, when he shall be pleased to send forth the sentence against us. It is proper therefore that we should *be found watching*. Do we not daily experience the truth of this, by the sudden death of the *gay*, the *bearty*, the *merry*? Even at *meat*, at *feasts*, at *sports*, death pays his unwelcome visit; he attacks and surprises in all shapes, and at all *times*. Equally when at peace, and among our friends, as in war, and by the hands of our enemies. Surely these constant examples of mortality should *rouse* us, to make our peace with our heavenly Judge. To strive to be reconciled to him *while it is day*: that we may with a safe conscience appear before him, when he shall call upon us, whether suddenly or otherwise. We have no better ground to hope for a respite, than our fellow creatures, who fall around us hourly, by the various visitations here related. We are sure we *shall* die, but uncertain *when*. When God's summoner death appears, there is no possibility of a *reprieve*. We must depart here, and remain under sentence till the day of judgment. It is written, as death doth *find* us (prepared or not) so we *continue* till the Judge decides our *eternal fate*, *whether the tree falleth to the south or toward the north, there it shall lie*. To this truth one of the holy fathers and martyrs, (St. Cyprian) witnesseth in these words: "As God doth find thee when he calls thee hence, so doth he judge thee." *Let us then make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord*, as the Wise Man advises in the vth Ecclus. 7. *nor let us put off from day to day*, but whatsoever we find in our hearts to do good, let us do it *immediately*, and continue always in well doing. For suddenly shall the dis-
pleasure

pleasure of the Lord appear. In thy security thou shalt be destroyed, and thou shalt perish in the day of vengeance. It behoveth us all to weigh these words diligently; to repeat them often to ourselves, for they strongly paint to us the dreadful condition of many, who abusing continually the mercy and long suffering of God, do never think of repentance and amendment of life. Let us adopt the advice of the preacher, Eccles. v. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Follow not thine own mind, and thy strength, to walk in the ways of thy heart, and say not who shall control me for my works, for the Lord will surely revenge thy pride. Say not I have sinned, and what harm hath happened unto me; for the Lord is long suffering, but he will in no wise let thee go; concerning propitiation be not without fear to add sin to sin. And say not his mercy is great, he will be pacified for the multitude of my sins, for mercy and wrath come from him, and his indignation resteth upon sinners. That is, what though thou art strong and hearty, what though thou art young and healthy; though thou enjoyest much riches and comforts of this world, or though when thou hast sinned thou hast received no immediate punishment for it, yet let none of these things cause thee to put off thy repentance, and to return unto the Lord; for in the day of his strict justice none of these things shall be able in the least to help thee. The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night. Above all, let us beware not to slight God's gracious call. If happily by the preaching of his holy word to you, or by some inward motion of his holy spirit on your hearts, or by whatever other instrument, (however accidental or humble) you are called to repentance; for the love of your eternal and precious souls neglect not the good opportunity that is afforded you; lest when you would wish to repent, ye may unhappily not find grace to do it. For to repent, is a most precious gift of God, which he will never grant

grant to them who live in carnal security; who make a mock of his threatenings, who despise the means of his grace by continually refusing to come to his holy table, or to hear his word and promises declared so often in his holy house; or who think to obtain his Spirit at their own pleasure, as if his gifts depended upon their polluted will.

The fifth and last cause, that should compel us to repentance and change of life, is the hope of escaping the dreadful punishment that awaits the wicked, the swift and utter destruction that hangs over the heads of all who will not return unto the Lord. Indeed the temporal plagues which are denounced against the people, or nations who finally persist in their vices and provocation of the dread Lord of heaven and earth, is enough, (as the prophet expresses it) to make one's ears tingle with fear, Jer. xix. 3. *I will deliver them (saith the Lord) to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places whither I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they be consumed off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.*

Behold what we are to expect as a sinful nation; what will surely overtake this land one day or other, if it goeth on in ungodliness and ingratitude towards the Lord its preserver. For thus hath the Lord done by many greater and mightier nations than ours, and why? Because they hardened their hearts, and would in no wise return from their evil ways, nor forsake the wickedness they had in hand, which had they done it would have caused the fierceness of the Lord's anger to depart from them. But what are all earthly torments combined, in comparison of the endless misery of those condemned to hell? To be banished from the sight and favor of God for ever and ever! to live increasing in misery, and blasphemous provocation of God's wrath! to mix with devils, and spirits of the

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the most *wicked men*, aggravating the wretchedness of one another. Mocking at your folly, in having despised your day of grace and trial ! to be sensible you might have been blessed and happy, past all power of words and thoughts, and that the gracious opportunity is lost to *all eternity* ! This surely is terrible, and well worth avoiding. But oh ! this is but a *slight and gentle* description of the miseries of the damned. There is no sun, no beauties of nature, no pastime, no sleep, nothing in short to soften the wretchedness of their condition. Here, these several comforts beguile the sorrows or troubles we may meet with. Friends may administer *help or hope* ; but there our once *best*, and *only* friend, becomes, through our own fault, and unavoidable necessity, our *terrible and eternal foe*. Here, if we are sick, health may return ; but there, is no lightening of pain ; no end of bitter remorse, and agonizing despair, but weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, is the portion of those who *love not God* ! The worm that ever gnaweth, the fire that is never quenched. In truth, *only* lost spirits know the exquisite torture of their nature. The just judgment of God must be felt to express the *revelation of* *you* appointed for the *wicked*. May it never be our lot to know it ! And the remedy against this evil is at hand, to all who will accept it—**REPENTANCE**. If we will repent and deeply lament our sins ; if we will confess our great unworthiness, and fly to God's mercy with full purpose to *amend our lives* ; taking sure hold on his promise through faith in Christ our Savior, to enable us to bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; believing firmly, that he hath atoned for all the sins we have repented of, and *showing our faith by our works* : Why then God will not only pour his manifold blessings upon us in this world, afford us his gracious favor and help to go on to victory ; but at last, after the painful trial of this life, he will reward

reward us with the inheritance of his children; make us capable of partaking joys, *that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* Even such a portion of the *divine nature*, as becometh children of such a father, and constitutes all that can be hoped for in the kingdom of heaven.

These precious and inexpressible delights hath Christ purchased for us by his death. Through him only we shall obtain them; but as he hath conquered sin and death, our hope is *certain*; we have only to believe and keep his commandments, and surely on *such conditions his commandments are not grievous.*

To him then, our all-sufficient friend, (if we will apply to and *depend* upon him) together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three persons and one God in mystical trinity united, be ascribed as most due, all praise, glory, and honor, world without end. Amen*.

* The vast importance of the subject impelled the editor to work up the latter part of this Discourse in the most impressive style his abilities would admit. In truth, the matter and manner of this *single Homily* in the original, (divested of its antiquated dress) is so excellently chosen and managed, so perspicuous and forcible, and the whole so well calculated to advance the cause of religion, and the salvation of mankind; that the editor will not scruple to assert, it is sufficient in *itself*, to establish the just character of the Homilies in the opinion of every true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Dis-

DISCOURSE XXVII.

An Homily against Disobedience and wilful Rebellion.

I SAMUEL XV. 23.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

A More hideous picture of the crime of rebellion cannot well be given, than in the sin to which the Prophet Samuel likens it. For by witchcraft, we understand such an utter distrust and contempt of the great God, who made and ruleth all things, as to incline the children of darkness and disobedience, professedly to own the power of the evil spirit, and to apply to him in the practice of such diabolical arts, as shall prevall upon him to empower them to do all manner of *secret mischief* against mankind, and which only the enemies of God and man can wish or delight to have effected *.

* We would not have it inferred from this *comparison*, and the *definition* of witchcraft, that we believe God suffers such a race of miscreants to exist in any country, in this age of the world, where the spirit of *christianity* prevails. The coming of Christ upon earth did certainly destroy *this* power of the Devil, and other demoniacal possessions, which were not uncommon in the world before the light and power of the religion of Jesus became universal

In * that Homily of our church, concerning the christian duty of proper allegiance to the lawful Sovereign of the land in which the providence of God hath appointed our worldly trial; the exhorta-

* Whatever sentiments, or principles, bold adventurous characters may entertain concerning government, and which, either through a restless spirit, or rage for innovation, or prejudices of education, they may be inclined to disseminate among the people; all serious and good men, who have duly studied the word of God, will unanimously agree, that in this, as well as every other subject that concerns the peace and welfare of mankind, the *scriptures* must be held as our *rule of faith*; the infallible directory by which we govern both our opinions, and outward conduct. If the precepts they contain, are ~~wise and true~~, they must be as effectual and indisputable in what they determine upon the character of *good subjects*, no less than what they recommend to render us *good christians*. The object, therefore, of this Homily, and what may be occasionally added to *enforce* its exhortations, is purely to declare the sentiments of the church to which we belong, on the subject of due and christian allegiance to our lawful Sovereign; and to submit those plain arguments which scripture affords in support of so wholesome a doctrine.

The extreme length of the Homily, and the great variety of arguments and scriptural proofs which so often recur in the body of the original discourse, added to the long, peaceable, loyal, and wise temper of this country, occasioned the Editor, at the beginning of his undertaking, to consider it at *that time* as almost a superfluous addition to his present work. But, as of late, such an universal spirit of rebellion, and dissatisfaction to established government in all shapes, has shewn itself throughout Europe. As in the destruction of royal power, the advocates for a *travelling* system, are for cutting off the whole chain of that subordinate authority, which depends upon it: and as unhappily, the most serious and public efforts have been made to poison the minds of the people; to lower their natural and just regard to the happiest form of government in the world; and to wean them from due allegiance to their Sovereign, the Editor has been induced to *change* his design; and doth now humbly submit to his readers, whether this addition may not afford some salutary provision, to retain and strengthen the commonalty in their duty to their lawful rulers, by furnishing them with the plain and persuasive tenets of the church to which they belong, upon a subject of such *vast importance* to the public *peace and welfare*. And also as these tenets are founded on the inspired word of God (wherein reason and religion unite to secure the happiness of the world), whether they ought not to be esteemed *superior* to all the wild reveries of *men*, which at best, may originate in visionary ideas, if not too often in *selfish, rash, and ruinous* desires.

tion opens very naturally, with a solemn scriptural description of the supreme authority of the Great Creator himself, and from thence deduces his right to the creature's submission to his authority in all things. Thus the Psalmist reasons (xcvi. 8, 10.), *Ascribe unto the Lord the honor due unto his name; bring presents, and come into his courts. Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord is King; that it is he that hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved, and how that he shall judge the people righteously; and to this becoming title, both prophets, evangelists, and apostles, bear concurring testimony. By him (saith St. Paul, Col. i. 16.) were all things created, both in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be THRONES, or PRINCIPALITIES, or POWERS.* Thus they declare the end of creation, and demonstrate the original subjection of man, by the history delivered in the book of Genesis; that though he was the chief of the creatures God had made, yet it pleased the Creator, that he should be in subjection to him, his Lord; and to confirm his will therein, he immediately gave him a law, as a token of his incumbent duty, and to guard him at the same time, from the danger of disobedience, by mercifully affixing a threat and punishment to the failure of it.

Further, to remind him continually of the necessary state of subjection, from the inferior, to the cause of his existence, God delegated an authority to man, over all the other part of the creation, which were to be subject to his control, as long as he remained faithful to the duty required of him from his Maker. And in proof of the beauty and value of this state of subordination, he was forewarned (in case of his offence) that universal discord would certainly take place; the power of his rule would be dissolved, and every species of misery succeed, that is inconsistent with a state of innocence, and just obedience. In the room of plenty,
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health, and life, poverty, disease, and death, would follow. Thus have we both the origin of all government, as instituted in God's rule, over men and angels, as also of *rebellion*; and its unavoidable effects. And since, as while man continued *obedient* in the *first* kingdom of wise appointment, God dispensed all manner of happiness to his subjects, and upheld their power over the rest of the creation; therefore it is most evident, past all dispute, that OBEEDIENCE is the *ruling virtue* in our most perfect nature, as creatures, and the spring whence every other comfort can be derived. And if so, then consequently *disobedience* or *rebellion* is the fatal cause of every evil, vice, and misery, to which the nature of mankind is now incessantly exposed. Now to confirm the desperate evil nature of all rebellion, we need only recollect the *author* of it, which was Satan himself, the first and most ungrateful rebel in all nature; for, as from his foul apostacy, and contempt of due subjection to the majesty of the Most High, he fell from the most exalted state of creaturely perfection, into the lowest abyss of misery; and, of the most glorious angel, was made the foulest and blackest fiend: so Adam, whom he seduced to *disobedience*, became thereby degenerated from a state of the best perfection, of which his nature was capable, in *this* life, and was subjected to the wretchedness his ingratitude had deserved.

By the fall of Satan, past redemption, he necessarily continues desirous to *increase* the very crime by which he is so hateful to an all-pure Being. For, as we read in St. Matthew, iv. 9., he endeavored even to tempt the *Savior of the world*, when, in the person of Adam's representative, the Blessed Jesus descended from the glories of his Father to restrain and destroy the power of the enemy: he falsely usurped the power of the Supreme, and vainly made this impious promise: *All these things*

things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. His habitation and punishment is described in the xxvth chapter of St. Mathew, and the 41st verse, to be everlasting fire; such torment as belongs to the Devil and his angels, as partakers in his rebellion. And in the viiith chapter of St. John, and 44th verse, he is described as a murderer from the beginning, and the father of liars; for, as St. Peter tells us (Eph. ii. 5, 4.), God spared not the angels that rebelled, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; because, as St. Jude observes, they kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation. That is, because they rebelled against the righteous rule of the eternal God, blessed for ever; who had raised them to the brightest posts of happiness. In short, because they were dissatisfied with his goodness, and their own unmerited glory.

Thus, when the evil spirit had effected the misery of our first parent, by seducing him into the same species of crime, against his heavenly Benefactor, which had destroyed himself, he was also driven from his particular state of happiness into a world of misery, and hard trial: For the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken (Gen. iii. 23.), it being impossible, in his imperfect, and rebellious nature, that he could any longer abide the presence of HIM, who cannot behold iniquity for a moment, and therefore he is said to have hidden himself from his Maker, through consciousness of his dreadful change.

Thus, through envy of the Devil (the author of rebellion, which is the very life of all sin), came death into the world, and they that do hold to the Tempter's side will be satisfied with it, (Wisdom ii. 24.). And what is worse, not only mortal death, and the long train of wretchedness that precedes it; but by this hateful act, they are become ex-

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posed to everlasting punishment, which was the malicious purpose of the Tempter to effect, that they might be for ever (like himself) shut out from God's returning favor. And as by one sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so sin is passed on all men, for that all have sinned, thus likewise must the sentence have been necessarily eternal, had not God, by the perfect obedience of his Son, Jesus Christ, repaired the mischief projected by the Devil against mankind, and thereby defeated the infernal purpose of his adversary against their immortal souls.

Of this grand work, you have been so fully instructed, in many of the former sermons, that it would be needless to repeat it here. The principal design of this discourse being to prove most clearly, that rebels and rebellion can have no place in mansions partaking of any perfection. They were driven first from heaven, and then from paradise.

Thus fallen from innocence and purity, and in consequence of the various sins attending their fall, God in his great wisdom, to prevent the utter confusion of all order, propounded laws, whereby to check the overflowings of ungodliness, and thus gave rise to established government, or due subordinate submission to superior rule. The first precept to this effect we read in Gen. iii. 16. Where the woman is sentenced to be subject to her husband, who in the words of this primitive law, was to rule over her. In natural gradation the children, consequently, became subservient to their parents, and servants also, in the same wise order, were naturally subjected to the authority of their masters. This is a plain and natural sketch of social government in its earliest state. But when mankind increased, and dispersed themselves into different regions of the world, uniting in towns, and different communities, rulers and governors were

were necessary for the peace, and order of society; and God, we find, did authorise their power and dominion in different provinces, and cities, according as the necessities of the people required such direction and restraint; and to whom the people in general were to be obedient, upon the principle of the original model of family compact above directed.

All who diligently study the scriptures in a pure spirit of humility, or desire of true knowledge, will find abundant passages to support the cause of regal government. For in both old, and new Testament, we are taught, that kings and princes, whether upright, or faulty, in themselves, are to be considered as ruling under the providence of Almighty God, and that it is the bounden duty of all subjects to obey the general laws by which they govern. *With kings, saith Job, xxxvi. 7. are God's eyes upon the throne. He doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted. I counsel thee (saith the Wise Man) to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God, Ecclesiastes viii. 2. that is, in respect to the covenanted allegiance thou hast sworn to him. Again, Stand not out in an evil thing, for he doth whatsoever pleaseth him, and if the spirit of a ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place, for yielding pacifieth great offences, xth chap. 4th verse. for where the word of a king is, there is power, and who may say unto him, what dost thou? viiith chap. 4th verse. That God giveth to many great wisdom and power, we read in Prov. viii. 15. By me (saith he) kings reign, and princes decree justice: by me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. That God defendeth them against their enemies, we are assured by this declaration of the royal Psalmist, among innumerable other passages, Great prosperity groweth he unto the king, and sheweth loving kindness unto David his servant, Ps. xviii. 5. Now know I that the Lord helpeth his anointed, and*

will defend him from his holy hill, even with the whole strength of his right hand, *Pl. xx. 6.* The king shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord, exceeding glad shall be he of thy salvation, *Pl. xx. 1.* But as there would be no end of general testimonies to the truth of this doctrine from the Old Testament, let these two particular passages of the New, be sufficient to establish it thus far. The first is conveyed in the words of St. Paul, *Rom. xiii. 1.* Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God, the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist, shall receive unto themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power, do thou that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same, for he is the minister of God to thee for good: but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil, wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake; for this cause pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore unto all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, honor to whom honor. The next passage upon this very subject is from St. Peter, *1 Ep. ii. 13.* Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the KING, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well, for so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men, love the brotherhood. Fear God, honor the king.

Now to all, upon whom the authority of holy scripture hath any influence, nothing can be clearer, and stronger, than what is contained in these two passages,

passages, to convince us of the subjection due to all who are set in authority over us, whether they be male, or female governors, for the Apostles speak of *power* in general. And as kings, and princes are considered as deriving their commission from God, consequently, to disobey *them*, is to rebel against the superintending providence of the Almighty. They do further prove, that such a mode of government is a great blessing of heaven, particularly towards the peaceable, and godly minded, and the inference from their arguments, seems very natural, that if servants ought to obey their *masters*, not only when *gently* treated by them, but even when they happen to be of a *proud* and *severer* temper, and that for *conscience sake*, as a duty to their *heavenly* master, of course it behoves the subjects of all kingdoms to obey their sovereign upon the same principle, although some should not be possessed with the same amiable, and endearing qualities as *others*. And it is no less idle, to suppose the appointment of these exalted persons to such important posts, depends wholly upon *accident* or *chance*, (as it is foolishly called) or their own ambition, any more than any other of the affairs of this life, which all observing, sensible, and religious people, must own to be directed by an over-ruling power, who raiseth and bringeth low, according to the unerring wisdom of his supreme decrees. And as God is *omnipotent* over all, so hath it pleased him to constitute the *regal* government as an *emblem* of his *own* person, for the gracious purposes of preventing anarchy, and confusion, and preserving peace, and order in the world. And that thus, as far as possible, even the imperfect things on earth, might represent (and point out) to us the perfection of the *heavenly* state. And that this is no *imaginary*, or partial state of the case, we have our blessed Lord's own authority for the propriety of the *comparison*, who maketh

use of it in many of his parables, *Therefore* (saith he) *Matt. xiii. 23. is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain KING, who had taken account of his servants.* Again, *Matt. xxii. 2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain KING, who made a marriage for his son.* We likewise read continually in the holy scriptures, that God taketh to himself the title of a KING. Thus in xlviiith Psalm, he is styled the *Great King upon all the earth.* In like manner, the Almighty doth sometimes vouchsafe to describe the condition of earthly princes by his own most august title, as in Psalm lxxxii. 1. 6. *God standeth in the congregation of princes, he is a judge among gods. I have said ye are gods, and ye are all the children of the Most High;* thus doubtless intending, to convey to us, what their government is, or should be, in some resemblance to his own, though in a far inferior degree; for the nearer the government of an earthly prince doth approach to that perfect pattern, the greater blessing it must be esteemed unto the people who enjoy it. And when (on the contrary) the dominion of the prince doth vary from the justice and mercy that distinguishes God's supremacy, then he must be considered as an instrument of God's anger, and due punishment for their sins, since both scripture and experience shew us, that in proportion as virtue and religion do prevail, in any land, the greater prospect is afforded of the continuance of *divine protection.* And on the other hand; however prosperous a country may appear from the effects of *luxury*, and the consequent variety of employments in different branches of trade, which tend to increase the number of the people, yet if *vice* gains ground (which is too often the consequence of plenty) through the bad example of those in power, there is more danger of certain ruin to such a government, than where less extravagance abounds, and the manners of the rulers are *regular, chaste,*
and

and commendable. For, as the Wise Man well observes, Ecclesiast. x. 16, 17. *Blessed art thou, O Lord, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness.* And so great is the blessing of a wise and upright king, that we may be assured, for his sake, the Lord doth often shew mercy to a nation when the transgressions of the people do justly threaten visitation, for a throne is established by righteousness, (saith Solomon) Prov. xvi. 12. On this account, a good and gracious prince is described as a shadow in the heat; as a defence against the storm; as nourishing dew, or growing showers, or fresh water springs in time of draught.

Nor are the scriptures less forcible in their description of the fatal consequences of vicious princes to a kingdom, for woe is denounced against that land whose prince is a weak, or wicked person, and where great men are early at their banquets, i. e. who devote themselves chiefly to sensual pleasures, for when the righteous are in authority the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn, Prov. xxix. 1. and indeed in another place we are told, that it is for the transgression of the wicked, that the number † of its rulers are increased.

This text affordeth a wholesome lesson against a vain, and dissolute course of life, in the superior ranks of every nation; whose wealth and power are given for their trial, to make up, from their superfluities, for the deficiencies of their dependent brethren: to be their pattern of gratitude to the supreme Director, for all his various benefits, so abundantly bestowed upon themselves, and to encourage them, by diligent and laudable exertions, in their higher posts, to be industrious and contented; thereby keeping up a wise and natural interest, and confidence between those of high and low degree, to the surest support of the state to which they both belong, against intestine or foreign foes.

† In truth, of the two, the evil is much less to be under the government, even of a faulty prince, than to be subject to the changeable, and tyrannical dominion of various ambitious, and contending rulers: for the emblem of divine government cannot be supplied by any, but in the executive authority of One only.

If then, (as must be granted), the condition of various kingdoms in this respect, is under the guidance of the most high: Is not the proper conduct of all subjects very manifest? Does it not appear upon this ground, that they are to fulfil their duty as *subjects*, with equal loyalty for *conscience sake*, to their lawful Sovereign.

Is it not for the greatest benefit of the community at large, that it *should* be so? For only judge of the terrible consequence that must ensue, if we admit the right of subjects doing evil, because the conduct of their ruler is in *some* points *exceptionable*. Were such a judgment lawful, the ungodly might many times be satisfied with the deportment of a Prince, whose ways were far from righteous; and from the same principle, disgusted with a sovereign whose morals and government opposed their evil wishes and licentious conduct. This would be to reverse all order, to allow more honor to the *foot* than to the *head*. In short, it would be to countenance entirely the rising of rebellion; for history doth amply prove, that most rebellious efforts ever have been fomented and cherished by turbulent and discontented spirits; by proud and restless men, who (impatient of control) at the bottom wish to bear the sway *themselves*. Civil war will ever be allowed the *worst* of temporal miseries; and who are so capable of *promoting* the worst of mischief, as the *worst* of men*. When the Lord seeth good to punish the *sin*

* It may be true indeed, that in our own intestine troubles of former dreadful memory, some characters might appear in the *beginning* of those commotions, whose designs and conduct might be exempted from meriting the *worst* description in human nature; and it is more than probable, had they lived to *see* the lamentable consequence of their early opposition, or even could have *suspected* it, they would have preferred a *temporary* inconvenience to the universal contest that deluged the land so many years with blood. This common charity and due respect to other valuable properties, in their character, incline us to conclude, That ornament of human nature, the gallant, wise, and truly patriotic Falkland, was an eminent instance in
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sins of any people, by this *forest* of his judgments, he employeth the instruments most *fit* to the purposes of his *abasing*; and finally destroyeth the instrument itself. He appointeth the wicked to punish the wicked, since the good (in the nature of things) must be incompetent to the task. And though many of the *best* may be permitted to fall, or suffer in the general ruin, yet we are not to conclude from thence that they partake *dearly* of the *correction*. On the contrary, we may rest assured, a large and permanent reward awaits them; nay it is a *mercy*, in such woeful times, to be prevented the distress of witnessing immediate horrors, and still greater favor to be delivered from suffering the distressful prospect of their *continuance*. We may always judge of the *quality* of a subject, by a ripeness for *rebellion*; whereas the faithful subject abhors nothing more than discord and commotion in the land.

Now as this is truly the case, how unnatural and absurd is it to judge those persons *competent* to reform the conduct of their *superiors*, who in general (as to their private life) are the worst of characters in the community. And indeed it is the leading principle of rebellion in common, that it is

favor of this *furnace*; for when he saw the ruinous drift of those *misnamed* reformers, he immediately took that part which honor, religion, and the welfare of the constitution directed to his superior talents, virtues, and upright principles. And perhaps it might be esteemed injustice and unfair construction against the memory of the brave and virtuous Hampden, and some few others, to suppose, that could they have suspected or foreseen the *dire effects* of the foul hypocrisy and traitorous ambition of the profane usurper, they would never have seconded his *rebellious* and *selfish* measures; but had they lived would have been as anxious to *repair* their errors, by assisting to *restore* the constitution of the country to its pristine happy form, as any that were at length concerned in bringing about that blessed event. From these few obvious observations on this subject, I mean only to point out the danger of resisting established power, by which wicked men are encouraged to effect their desperate designs; for when once the spirit of rebellion is raised, it is no easy matter to restrain its fatal career.

levelled frequently against princes of the *best* report, in many essential virtues, although perhaps some unfortunate errors or infirmities may have contributed to countenance the evil-minded to destroy them. Rebellious projects are often levelled likewise at the gentle nature, youth, or sex of those, whose power their enemies would oppose, by terrifying them into measures agreeable to their unlawful wishes. But as when this ruinous spirit is let loose, all sensible persons will allow it worse than the most indifferent government than ever yet existed: so we must conclude the *remedy* far more pernicious than the *disease*, and a very rash attempt to rectify the less injurious failings or defects of either prince or government. But as while human nature remains so very depraved, the *best* of princes cannot be without their *enemies*. Since the good are ever obnoxious to the *bad*, and the latter naturally wish a change to screen them from the lash of just and salutary laws: therefore if so absurd a plea should be admitted, that as all subjects who dislike their king, may have *reason to rebel*, there would not be a kingdom on the globe wherein rebellion would not take place. It is certainly more consistent with good sense and peaceful order, that the worst should be directed by the *best*, and walk in the example of the obedient. But even supposing a prince to be both vicious, and indiscrete in point of governing: if as the word of God assures us, such rulers are often permitted as a punishment for the wickedness of the people over whom they reign, is it warrantable or wise to provoke God's anger further, by rebelling against the *scourge* which our own primary rebellion against God's holy laws hath brought upon us? This would be to magnify the evil of their doings, and increase the *merited chastisement*. To this particular case the holy Job speaks thus, (xxxiv. 30.) *God causeth the hypocrites (or wicked men) to reign for the sins of the people.* And

And the prophet Hosea confirms it, (xiii. 11.) *He giveth a king in his anger, and taketh him away in his wrath.* Meaning clearly, that he permitteth an evil governor for the correction of a transgressing people, and removeth a good one from them, on the same account. And as it is to the people, so is it to the king, as declared in 1 Sam. xii. 25. *That if they shall do wickedly, they shall be consumed both they and their king.* It is not for mortals to wrest the weapons out of the hand of omnipotence; *vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

From all that has been said, it is very plain, that the lot is in the hand of the Lord, and he ordereth as seemeth to him best, for the correction of his people for their offences, and for their encouragement in well doing. As we therefore may most truly say, we are now blessed with a good prince, let us be thankful to God for it, and engage him to continue the blessing by our bounden duty both to the Almighty, and the sovereign he hath pleased to set over us. We must not presume to say we deserve such a great gift from his hands, whom we daily provoke by our ingratitude and numerous trespasses. Let us therefore humble ourselves before God, and not become ungrateful for his abundant mercies to us. And according to the direction of God's holy word, let us pray for our sovereign's increase in all goodness, and the continuance of so valuable a blessing; and this advice St. Paul particularly delivers in the 1 Ep. Tim. ii. 1. *I exhort you, (says he) that first of all supplications and prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority; and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.*

The obvious remark that presents itself from these exhortations of the apostle, is this: that we are to pray for the chief governor of the realm in which

which we live without exception, in point of character. If he is good, our supplications naturally will be distinguished by *thanksgiving* for the blessing. If bad, we shall with equal charity be led to beg his reformation, and patience in ourselves, to *bear the trial*. For it is observable, that at the period of time, when St. Paul, under the influence of God's good spirit, delivered this advice, the greater part of christians were under the rule of the most cruel of the Roman emperors, heathens, and tyrants. And in the Old Testament we find, that even when the Jews were in captivity to the king of Babylon, notwithstanding all the miseries they endured from his barbarity; their king, nobles, parents, children, and the dearest kindred slain; their towns and country burnt and desolated; yea even the holy city and temple utterly destroyed, still this was the language of God's servant Baruch, when he wrote to the children of Israel to repent, and lament the cause of their misfortunes; that instead of resisting or being disobedient to the instrument the Lord had used for their correction, *They should pray for the life of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and for the life of Balthazar his son, that their days might be on earth as the days of heaven.* Not to add rebellion to their former sins, but to pray for strength for the Lord to lighten their eyes to see their error, that they might be under the shadow, (that is, the protection) of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and of Balthazar his son, and might serve them faithfully and find favor in their sight; for they were truly conscious that their sins had brought this judgment on them. Now if the example of the earliest and best christians, and that of God's people of old, prescribes this conduct towards princes of such description, (their bitter and most cruel enemies :) surely it much more becometh us, to pray for a long, prosperous, and godly reign to the gracious sovereign under whom we live, to whom
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in truth, may be ascribed the character of a *virtuous prince*, and in whom, besides the benefit of an exemplary life, we enjoy that additional particular blessing mentioned in holy writ, *that he is not a stranger*, but endeared to his subjects and their welfare, by every *natural tie* of birth and personal interest. And were we to prove insensible to such peculiar benefits of heaven, we must be condemned as the most ungrateful of the sons of men; and should deserve to feel those miseries, which a rash and ungodly violation of good, and quiet government will ever entail upon seditious and rebellious subjects.

Such characters indeed, do not deserve the name of *subjects*, for whereas it is the duty of all true lovers of their country, to risk their lives and fortunes to preserve the public peace, and defend the common property of the land which gave them birth, the seditious spirit, on the contrary, neither values the life of the sovereign, nor the welfare of the people; but is more hateful and destructive in the execution of his designs, than even the outrages of a *foreign enemy* would, or could effect. And if there are minds so foully corrupted as to devise such atrocious wickedness against an *upright prince*, and a *happy government*, to what a depth of mischief would such characters be carried, were they really governed by tyrants, or oppressed by unjust laws? The idea of such horrible depravity surpasses all description. We have nothing left but to pray for their quick repentance, and thorough reformation, *that the hearts of the disobedient may be turned to the wisdom of the just*. And in pursuance of this christian spirit, it is our further duty to pray no less for fortitude of disposition, as far as in our power, to check and repel such unnatural and ruinous measures as may endanger the life of our Sovereign, and the dearest interests of our country. Not flying from the danger when duty to God, and the obedience

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to those he hath set over us, demand our sworn allegiance, but trusting in God's power to help us in supporting of an *upright cause*; which every individual is able in a *degree* to do, if not deserted by the only Being, in whom it is our wisdom to rely, it being the duty of every loyal subject, and real lover of his country, to stand or fall in the defence of those blessings he enjoys, by the favor of that God who has made him a member of a happy form of government. And unless he does so, he betrays a cowardly and unworthy spirit; a wicked distrust and fear, and deserves to experience the various miseries that sooner or later God will inflict upon rebellious subjects.

May the Almighty grant grace, power, and wisdom, to our Sovereign Lord the King, and his council, to detect and prevent all malicious and destructive projects against their lives, and the state over which they rule; that under him we may continue to be long godly, and quietly governed, and experience the blessed fruits of peace

I cannot withhold an observation which strikes me forcibly on this subject, as relative to the conduct of the *nobles, clergy, and loyalists*, in the *beginning* of the dreadful troubles in a neighboring kingdom. It seems from their precipitate retreat on all sides, and forbearing to exert their *united* interests and power, that they were infatuated by *bad counsel*, or *extreme dependency*, and as it were devoted to *destruction*; according to the consequence of the common saying, *Quos Deus, &c.* For doubtless had they stood their ground, had they dispersed into the different parts of the country, most favorable to their cause, though the contest might have been *severe*, it would, in *human* probability, have neither been so long or bloody. By such a *band*, they would have been better able to aid the plans and movements of the allies, to restore peace and order. But the general panic and injudicious flight, even of the rich, the brave and powerful, lead to the presumption that the anger of the Almighty was in force against the *sins of the people in general*; that the nation had sinned up a measure of its iniquities; which, whenever it is the case, all the wisdom of man degenerates into *error and confusion*; the most obvious means of safety are overlooked, and nothing but such a purification as merited *punishment* produces, is likely to effect a *reformation*, and a state of permanent tranquillity. This is the light in which alone we can observe such extraordinary revolutions!

and loyalty among ourselves for all generations. And to that good end, may both our gracious King, and all in authority under him, and every subject of the realm, determine, henceforth, to walk in humble, virtuous, and pious living, to the honor of Gods laws, and the glory of his name. That, in the world to come, we may reap the fruits of everlasting life, through the merits and mediation of his Son our Savior Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God and King immortal, be all glory, thanks, and praise, world without end. Amen.

THE PRAYER.

O HOLY and most merciful God, thou Lord of hosts, and ruler of the universe, the only giver of all victory; who, by thine infinite and irresistible power, art able to defend the weak, against the mighty, and to subdue hosts of wicked men, by the smaller number of thy chosen and faithful servants, calling on thy name. Defend, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord, our present reigning sovereign, George the Third, and all the people committed to his charge. Defeat the evil purposes, good Lord, of all our enemies, whether of church or state, whether levelled against the peace and happiness of the people of this land, or against the life, crown, or lawful authority, of our gracious Sovereign. Grant, O most merciful Father, (if it is thy blessed will) that the hearts of the disobedient may be brought (through the power of thy grace) to the wisdom of the just; and that all who proudly

proudly and profanely bid defiance to the peaceful doctrines of thy holy word, and seek to disturb the tranquillity of the realm, may be converted from their rebellious pursuits, to obey the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, the Savior of the world; so that we and they may jointly glorify thy holy Name, for all thy mercies to the faithful and the penitent. Lighten, we beseech thee, the darknesses of this world, to see what is just and pleasing in thy sight; as becoming loyal subjects, and loving fellow christians. Soften the hardness of all hearts, and defend us from the cruel devices of our enemies; that we, and all who profess, and duly follow the holy religion of thy beloved Son, may thereby procure help and strength to protect us from all dangers, without the sad necessity of shedding christian blood. Hear us, O Lord, in behalf of all who are oppressed by rebellious tyranny; for the welfare of all christian countries, and especially for this our native land, and those kingdoms over which our Sovereign Lord the King doth rule by thy direction. May they, through thy divine protection, and gracious favor, continue in the truth of the gospel, and enjoy the blessings of peace, loyalty, and prosperity. And, for these needful and great mercies, may we have grace continually to join with one accord in heart and voice; that, being united in godly concord among ourselves, we may evermore magnify thy great and glorious Name, who with the Son our Savior, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, art one eternal, almighty, and most merciful God, to whom be all praise, honor, and dominion world without end. Amen.

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

The Homily against Disobedience and wilful Rebellion.

SECOND PART.

Same Text.

AS in treating upon the obedience and disobedience of people to their lawful sovereign, our arguments have hitherto been drawn from holy scripture, which is the *infallible* rule in all things, to *real* christians. It may not be unprofitable, in *further* testimony of the duty of a peaceable, and loyal conduct in mankind, to adduce a few *more* proofs from God's most holy word, of the due forbearance of all subjects, not only to good and gracious princes, but also to evil-disposed, and oppressive rulers.

The first instance that may be advanced, is to be found in 1 Sam. xiv. 11. When king Saul, who himself, for disobedience to the *King of kings*, had justly incurred the character of a wicked prince, and was even rejected from the favour of his Maker, for preferring his *own* will to the *positive command* of the all-wise Director of events; yet as long as it pleased God to permit his reign,

his servant David continued to *obey* him. And though king Saul returned no kindness to his faithful, valiant, and peaceful servant, but (on the contrary) treated him in the most unjust, and persecuting manner, seeking, by every possible means, to *destroy* him; yet sought not David to revenge the evil, by *rebelliſh*, but had recourse to flight, to save his life. Nay when it pleased God to put the king into his power, so that he might easily have slain him, yet would he neither lift his hand against the king, nor suffer his companion to him any harm. On another occasion also, the Lord afforded the fullest trial of David's pure allegiance to his sovereign; for having found an opportunity of entering the very tent of Saul (together with Abishai, who was very differently disposed from David, towards the king) and finding him *asleep*, he might, more easily than before, have taken away his life; yet neither this time would he take the advantage of his enemy, or suffer Abishai to do him violence. So strictly did he adhere to duty as a *subject*; and the virtue of his words, on several occasions, when urged to take revenge upon his powerful enemy, confirms the value of his *advice*; for he said, *the Lord forbid, that I should do this thing unto my master; to stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed*; 1 Sam. xxiv. 6. And in reply to Abishai's advice, on the occasion above related, he said, *Destroy him not, for who can lift his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless*; David said, moreover as the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into the battle, and so perish. *The Lord forbid that I should slay the Lord's anointed*. And to compleat this faithfulness of David to his king, and evince the horror he conceived of such a crime, as *compassing his death*, we read, that when the messenger, who had killed Saul, even at the king's express desire, delivered the account of what he had done, imagining that David would

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rejoice to hear the fate of such a mortal foe, especially as he brought the crown, and bracelet, the ensigns of royalty, which were pledges that the time was come, when David, by God's appointment, was to succeed to the throne of Israel: yet was that trusty and tender hearted servant, so far from glorying in the news, that he rent his clothes, and wept, and fasted, and lamented at the melancholy fate of Saul. Nay, so averse was he from countenancing what the messenger had done, or rewarding him, as he expected, for the presents he had brought, that David, in a tone of solemn authority, asked him, whether he did not tremble to commit this act against the Lord's anointed? and on his confession of the deed, he ordered the messenger to be immediately dispatched, saying, *thy blood be on thy head, for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying I have slain the Lord's anointed.*

Now as all scripture is written for our instruction, doubtless this most singular example of David's loyalty, and virtue, as a subject, is recorded to exhort all subjects from rebellion, and to uphold them in their due allegiance. For David's conduct is evidently exalted, in that having so often valiantly and successfully defended his king, and country, in former times, he had obtained the favour of the people, and might have been applauded and supported in the act, had he been disposed to take revenge, and thus usurped the regal power. And besides all this, he could not be accounted in the rank of common subjects, being heir apparent to the crown and kingdom, according to the positive appointment of the Lord, who had pronounced him Saul's successor. And as a further pretension for taking such a step, he was in considerable esteem with all the nation, in consequence of God's so publicly preferring him, when Saul had been declared as the enemy to God, and all the people, through disobedience to the Almighty Power, that

had set him on the throne. And as the exalted virtues of the *former*, did naturally increase the malicious hatred and persecution of the *latter*; so David would have been acquitted, and commended, in the eyes of a vindictive, undiscerning populace, for revenging such repeated, and unjustifiable provocations. Not so, the man *who feared the Lord*. He knew such conduct would bring a certain curse upon his reign and family. The same good Spirit that caused him to be styled the man *after God's own heart*, (some traits of human depravity excepted) inspired this grace, and dutiful deportment, this considerate, and uniform respect to the will of the SUPREME.

The replies we may suppose the faithful David would have made to the proud, and fallacious reasonings of the rebellious, are too obvious, from his steady, and humane deportment, to need a regular detail. In general we may observe, for certain, that, if he was thus obedient to the will of the Almighty, even towards a prince who had so often *forfeited his protection*, and whose death appeared to him unwarrantable in any subject to accelerate, in any situation; far greater we may conclude, would have been his just displeasure, and retaliation against any, so unnatural, and ungrateful a desire of the death of an inoffensive and beloved prince; of one signalized by many positive marks of the divine protection, and deliverance, and studious, upon principle, to promote the general welfare of the people committed to his charge. In short, this memorable deportment of the loyal, and pious David, is sufficient, on this head, to excuse any further testimony from the records of the Old Testament, which, though numerous, cannot be more convincing.

In the history of the gospel, we have also several singular texts, recommending peaceable compliance to the authority of the reigning power, however seemingly burdensome and oppressive in its decrees. The

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cheerful obedience of the blessed virgin, so highly favored by the Great God of nature, and the still more eminent instances to the powers that be in the humble condescension of the blessed Jesus, to the unjust, and barbarous sentence against himself, by the established magistrate, though only acting by a delegated power from a heathen emperor, evinces the exalted virtue of peaceable obedience, and condemns all possible pretence for seditious, or rebellious enterprise. Christ not only paid tribute, according to the established right of the reigning prince over a conquered people, but also in the person of his representative, a stranger born, and a heathen by profession; he acknowledged the power and authority to be delegated by God, as being, for the time, the governor of the province, and submitted patiently even to his sentence of a painful, and dishonorable death.

It is needless to produce any further proofs of the uniform obedience of the most eminent characters to the ruling powers of the world, for peace and conscience sake, and on the principle of avoiding the greatest evil, both in their own conduct, and the consequence to the state from stubborn resistance, and rebellion; for could we fill a volume, with arguments to the purpose, the pattern of the divine Author of our religion, who is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, must render every other proof superfluous. All, therefore, who disdain to follow his example, and who either secretly, or violently, oppose the means of peace and order, which God, in his wisdom and goodness, hath appointed to prove our christian gratitude, and submission to his providential care of us, must be accounted worse than Jews or infidels, and unfit to enjoy his future kingdom of peace and love, obtained for us by Christ, through peace, and long suffering; the peculiar place provided for all faithful, and godly subjects, and where the turbulent, dissatisfied, and rebellious,

rebellious, can never expect to enter. God grant we may all be of the happy number of the former, and may have grace to strive to bring many of the latter to a juster way of thinking, that we may equally partake of the riches of Christ's redemption. To whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all praise and power for ever and ever. Amen.

The Third Part of the Homily against Disobedience and wilful Rebellion.

THE sinful nature of all rebellion having been already proved by, or from holy scripture, both in the first and second parts of this discourse, it may be profitable to proceed to shew you, in the third place, (in order to deter mankind from yielding to this crime) how very hurtful it is to the Almighty; what dreadful threatenings he hath denounced against it; and what severe chastisement await all those, who are engaged in either plotting, or executing such ruinous measures against their fellow creatures: even distresses of the most affecting nature here, and to many, *unlesse misery* hereafter, in the kingdom of the grand rebel, and his disobedient angels. On the other hand, in order to encourage in his creatures a spirit of due subjection and obedience, God holds out the choicest of his temporal gifts, to those who cultivate the duties of obedient, faithful subjects, even the supreme blessing of peace, and worldly comfort now, and through the riches of his mercy in Jesus Christ, eternal peace and joy in the world to come.

To convey a just idea of the wickedness of all rebellion, both towards God and men, it is the foulest

foulest compound of ingratitude and cruelty. It must not be considered in the light of a single sin, but viewed in all its terrible consequences, as the parent of robbery, murder, and every species of crime and misery that possibly can be conceived. First, as a sin against Omnipotence; it is a breach of all God's holy laws, in striving to effect what he hath so expressly forbidden to be done. Secondly, it is the rankest perjury, by breaking the oaths men have made before God, to perform allegiance to the prince, or potentate, his Providence has chosen to be their ruler. And besides this double breach of solemn engagement, God is again most heinously offended, by the additional disloyal, and blasphemous profession, which rebels employ to bind and confirm each other in their disobedience. Nay, they not only disturb the peace of the community, by unsettling the minds of the people from their industry, and honest labor; in the common days of the week, by associations, and convocations, but even the Lord's day is scandalously profaned by their neglect of all due honour to that holy institution, employing the time of real devotion to God's service, in plotting and contriving their seditious projects, or in arming and marshalling for the destruction of their countrymen. In short, the prominent feature of rebellion, is universal contempt of all religious ordinances, proceeding often to the most violent acts of horrible sacrilege, both against God's place of worship, and even his holy word itself. And this the history of former grievous times will fully prove to have been the shocking practice of many who affected sanctity in an extraordinary degree, and boasted their design of general reformation.

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* The inconsistency of the fanatics of former days, who were the most desperate foes to all established order, is worthy notice. For while their absurd ideas of independency carried them so far, as to allow of no other governor on earth, but Christ, they were rather

That it opposes the *first* law of positive obedience to the *Supreme* has been most fully stated. The preference of men's own vain fancies and rebellious will, to the *wholesome* will of God, is a no less manifest infringement of the *second* commandment. The *third* must likewise be necessarily disobeyed, by the consequent appendage of rash and unlawful oaths and imprecations. The solemnity of the *sabbath* is grossly profaned by riotous and political meetings and caballing. The *fifth* is broken by the disgrace brought upon worthy parents and relations, by the rebellious practices of their *disorderly connections*. The *sixth* is woefully disregarded, since

to ignorant, or perverse, as to trample under foot the positive precepts of *Christ himself*, refusing the very example of the *Chief*, to whom alone they thought allegiance due. Their affection of religious motives, led them always to affirm, they fought the Lord in all their undertakings; but it is clear they fought him not, *where he was to be found*, or they would have listened to the pure voice of his most holy word: they would have fought him in the history of his own life and practice, as preaching peace, meekness, and contentment to every rank and order of men; and shewing submission and obedience to all established power. Their conduct never could be more strongly ridiculed and reprobated, than in the following historical anecdote:—When by superlative hypocrisy, the usurper had attained his own ambitious purposes, and found it necessary to throw aside the tools of fanaticism, he commissioned a witty paragon of his own tribe to dismiss the formal remnant of the mock parliament then sitting. Upon this peremptory demagogue's interjection of, *What are ye doing here!* the pious speaker of this ridiculous assembly replied, *That they were seeking the Lord.* Then you may well see, (said he) for so my certain knowledge the Lord has not been here these many years. And doubtless he was a good judge, how little the proceedings of those times partook of the divine influence, who was privy to the mystery of their management. So it ever was, and ever will be; the deep and crafty movers of sedition call from the dregs of the community, such instruments, as are useful for their work: idle, conceited, and discontented persons; fraudulent tradesmen, and illiterate mechanics: in short, dissolute and desperate adherents, who in prospect of a change, (however terrible the general consequence) do promise themselves some benefit to their shattered circumstances. If they succeed, their instigators step from behind the curtain, and triumph as the heroes of the tragic scene. If they fail in their pernicious efforts, they are left to the fate to which stupidity, or extreme audacity hath brought them.

murder: the good reputation, thieves and cruel self

murder in every shape, becomes the certain consequence of lawless insurrection. The seventh, as inevitably violated, by the shameful disorders that are committed against decency and virtue. The eighth, is continually broken by the liberty taken in times of this description, with the property of every orderly member of the community. The ninth, which positively requires the most faithful testimony in every case between mankind, is notoriously abused by false impeachments, and accusations of those that are not willing to join the general mischief. And the tenth, can hardly be supposed to be much noticed by those whose principal object is actually to deprive their fellow-citizens of their property, and thereby realize the iniquity of unjust desire of their neighbor's goods. Thus rebellion wages open war with God and men, and may be justly said to contain the seven capital or deadly sins, viz. pride, envy, anger, covetousness, idleness, sensuality, and lasciviousness. First ambition, which is the offspring of pride, is that which in imitation of satan's original crime, prompts the inferior to displace the lawful chief, and usurp equality of power; to figure on situations for which neither Providence of nature ever designed or qualified them: to destroy the beauty of order, and value of subordination: and in truth to aim at filling in their own persons, the very stations they pretend to reprobate. As to the remaining sins, attending such ruinous effects, they are the inseparable effects of all rebellion. As to sloth, debauchery, and extravagance, the usual companions of dissolute manners, when men by their excesses have reduced their patrimony and possessions, and are driven to despair of ever retrieving their former splendor; they are ripe for any innovation; and under the pretence of virtuous exertions and reformation, they become the most furious promoters of INSURRECTION. In short, rebels are evidently the worst of plunderers and assassins; because the most notorious thieves and cruelest

murderers, (while government is preserved, and law and justice regularly administered,) can be but few, comparatively with the deluded merciless herd of plunderers and destroyers, which rebellion must raise: for thus both the condemned and the suspected unite together, and make the whole community the object of their prey.

Such are the alarming terrors that await rebellion; that all will do well to pray against such grievous visitations, and employ their best endeavours to promote among their neighbors a spirit of due obedience and godly peace: for when once anarchy and confusion have taken place, all interest in our property is at an end; and general depredation, violence, and cruelty, must ensue. Neither innocence or chastity are spared; wives, husbands, parents, children, aged, and infants, all are equally exposed to the brutal violence, and unbridled barbarity of rebellious fury. In short, it being (as is war indeed in every shape) the forest of all God's judgments, so we read in 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. that David, (who was well experienced in the horrors of the event) when threatened with the punishment of only common war from God, intreated that he might fall into the hand of the Lord, and not of men, preferring either pestilence or famine, to the misery and devastation of the sword. And indeed, these other plagues do frequently attend or follow it; for the disorderly lives of the insurgents, who are under no control or discipline, do generally produce the former, through various natural causes of filth, surfeiting, and want of due precaution to preserve health; and on the other hand, by the injudicious waste of ruinous multitudes; and the check to commerce, and neglect of cultivating the ground; the latter calamity frequently takes place to the almost utter destruction of the nation. So that sickness and war, in times like these, destroy as many as the sword. We have an infallible and alarming caution given

given us by Christ himself, of the ruinous nature of disobedience. *Woe unto every kingdom (saith he) that is divided against itself; for it is thereby most surely brought to destruction, and cannot stand.* The further woeful difference of all rebellious contests, from any other war is this, that in common wars, against a foreign enemy, though certain miseries take place, which every christian mind cannot fail sincerely to deplore, yet the evil is not committed by countrymen and fellow-citizens, against each other; whereas when those who should unite in mutual defence, make way for all the secret wishes of the common enemy, when the disloyalty of the father either procures his own death, or that of his children, and effects besides the forfeiture of their inheritance; when men are mad enough to trample upon the value of the laws, to promote all manner of wickedness, to set the most abandoned characters at liberty, empowering them thereby to multiply their former crimes against the innocent and defenceless; when they are regardless of wasting the treasure of their country, and impoverishing their native land; and by thus weakening its resources, exposing it to the invasions of foreign foes; by which the lives and property, and liberties of their friends and families, are all devoted: these are among the many odious stains that mark the character of rebellion, and which render it more tremendous, and to be dreaded, than any other war. For in the contest with our foreign foes, the gaining of a victory brings joy and honor to the people. Nay though we should lose the day, the value and justice of the cause, affords some satisfaction to the survivors; and as for those who fall in defending their prince and country's rights, they gain honorable testimony to their good endeavors. They so far die with a good conscience, and may obtain a heavenly reward for acting in their station, with due fidelity and courage. But rebels, however successful for a time,

a time, in their bold and wicked designs, yet infamy attends them *here*, for thus dishonoring their character as men. If they *escape*, they live in merited *shame* and reproach of *conscience*. And if they *fall* in fighting against their king and country, and their own flesh and blood, we are not warranted by any precedent of divine authority, to pronounce their future existence happy: but usually their conduct even *here*, is publicly marked by merited infamy and disgrace. They suffer an ignominious death as due unto their crimes; their heads and bodies are exposed on poles, or hung in chains as food for birds of prey, being esteemed unworthy *christian burial*; and what is *worse*, should they die *impenitent* (as from the stubborn and truly disobedient nature of their sin) is commonly the case, the *tempter* and author of their desperate delusion, seizes upon their devoted spirits, loaded with the guilt and mischief, which he himself inspired *. And it was in charitable warning of this most fatal consequence, that St. Paul enforces the virtue of obedience, not only from fear of *mortal* death and punishment, but also for conscience sake towards God; admonishing thereby, that all who wilfully rebel against their lawful sovereign, and the established laws by which the peace and welfare of the nation is protected, do so effectually dishonor and displease their Maker, that they hazard the *eternal condemnation* of their immortal souls. Let us then in all things strive to prove ourselves the children of obedience, in humble peaceful hope of thereby *preparing* ourselves for the society of the *redeemed*: and for fear the just judgment of God should visit

us. And in the animated language of an elegant modern poet, describing the reception of a wicked spirit by the father of all evil, the cruel triumph of the prince of darkness over the wretched prisoner, is thus strongly painted:

Like a true devil, satan smil'd,
 Bonaparte with the torment of his child.

ns both now, and in a future state of being. For as HEAVEN only, must surely be the proper place for the spirits of quiet, godly, and obedient subjects; and bell the only suitable mansion for rebels against God, their king, and country. So in this life, that kingdom is most happy, where most subjection and good order doth appear, as being the sign or figure of heaven itself. And on the contrary, where the restless discontented spirit of rebellion prevails, there is the express similitude of bell, whose inhabitants were from the beginning styled *the children of disobedience, and rebellion*. Thus in the end it shall be found, that as *blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth*; so all who love peace shall be called *the children of God*, and become inheritors of heaven with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Of which blessed number may we all prove through the merits and help of Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Savior. Amen.

Now, &c.

Fourth Part of the Homily against Disobedience and wilful Rebellion.

SO odious to God, so dangerous and destructive to the lives, and souls of men, is this evil disposition in human nature, that it is impossible to render our exhortation against it, too frequent, full, or serious. To the good and therefore, that you may hold all such iniquitous practices in just abhorrence, it will help to strengthen your good resolutions of continuing obedient, and to alarm you from a different conduct, to be informed further from

from scripture example, how terribly at different times, God hath resented the very *inclination* to this sin, although the rebellious spirit of the people was confined to *inward* murmuring and disaffection only, against their governors, and though the treason had not proceeded to *overt* action. But as *in* truth, when once the evil spirit is raised, the author of the mischief doth never rest 'till he hath brought his ruinous wiles into *execution*, so the superior power of God was necessary to interfere, to check the fatal mischief of his sinful projects.

We read in the sixth chapter of the Book of Numbers, 2d verse, that for the single sin of *murmuring* against God's appointed governors over his people, and for harboring a desire of lowering his authority, and exalting their *own*, the Lord punished even Aaron, and Miriam, with the sore affliction of a leprous disorder. Again in the xvth chapter of the same book, we have the celebrated record of that fearful judgment which fell upon several thousand of the seditious part for rebelling against Moses, God's appointed governor and chief magistrate, over the people. The promoters of this seditious attempt, and those connected with them, went down alive into the pit; the remainder of the transgressors were consumed by fire, and fourteen thousand and upwards were destroyed by a pestilence. At another time, their rebellious disaffection was punished by a terrible death occasioned by the sting of venomous serpents. Now these awful instances of God's severe displeasure against this *particular* sin, are written for the future and perpetual warning of all subjects, in all lands, where any faith in God prevails. For it is observable from Moses's explanation in the xvth Exodus, and 9th verse, that God did always consider the disobedience of mankind, as not merely trespassing against *mortal* creatures like themselves, but as a *heinous* sin against *Himself*. For as Moses in meek-

ness,

ness, and due subordination to God's superior control, declares, *The Lord hath heard your murmuring which ye make against him.* And what are we that we murmur against God? *Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord;* for the Lord had expressly appointed Moses and Aaron to lead forth, and govern his people in the wilderness. And so highly offensive is such resistance, in the most retired thought, (since out of the heart proceedeth all manner of evil) that it is not only forbidden throughout the word of God, but positively threatened with a discovery by some most secret and unexpected information. *Curse not the king;* (saith the Wise Man) *ne not in thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed chamber, for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the secret matter.* Thus intimating, by this figurative expression, that it is in a manner impossible to conceal any transactions of such wicked tendency and hateful nature.

Now among other awful examples, with which the Scriptures furnish us, to discountenance unlawful resistance to the reigning powers; the effecting story of *Absham* is evidently in point; for though countenanced in his transgression by some of the greatest, and most noble men of the state; though the king's son; though high in esteem among the people, no less than dearly valued by his parents; and celebrated for the accomplishments of mind and person; nay, though the king himself commanded not to touch his life, although forfeited by the foulness of his trespass, and all men on that account, were slack in their endeavors to take the traitor; yet did the judgment of heaven overtake him in a singular manner, and arrested him in the commission of his crime, by a fatal accident, which leaves a perpetual monument of what all rebels may finally expect, however flattered and encouraged in their evil courses by those as wicked as themselves. And the same fate doth commonly befall the partners of

the conspiracy, no less than the *principals*, for we see that Ahitophel, the wicked counsellor in this traitorous business, was so far abandoned, that high as he was in rank, and eminent in talents, and though he escaped the punishment of *public justice*, yet reproach of conscience would not suffer him to be at peace, but drove him to desperation, and *self-murder*. A valuable warning to all men not to embark in such abominable exploits, which you see ended in the destruction of the heads of this rebellion, and of forty thousand of the lower orders of the people. The same untimely, and deserved fate pursued the rebel *Sheba*, who made another attempt to dethrone his royal master, he lost his head by the discovery of a woman, and his rebellion instantly was quelled. And thus we shall find it always ultimately happen, that such ungodly efforts end in some most horrible misfortune to the conspirators, and their adherents. For though God, in his unerring designs, is pleased occasionally to give alternate success to the assaults of foreign enemies, against the nations with whom they are at war, yet have we no precedent of long prosperity being the portion of foul *rebellious subjects*. There is a very remarkable circumstance in sacred history to prove the *different* success attending this different *kind* of war. We read in the *xvth* Genesis, that though five kings and princes with all their armies made a rebellious war against king Cherdorlaomer, yet were they unable to succeed. (*for twelve years they had served him, but the thirteenth they rebelled against him.*) The justice of his cause gained him the protection of heaven, and he defeated them *all*. But very different was his *success* when attacked by Abraham, and his small company. Doubtless because Abraham owed no subjection to Cherdorlaomer, but only attacked him on a just and noble cause of rescuing his kinsfolk from *captivity*, which as *sojourner* only, in the land subdued

by

by Cherdorlaomer, it was *unjust* that they should suffer in common with the enemy's *real subjects*. Abraham therefore, through God's blessings on his arms, defeated Cherdorlaomer, rescued the prisoners, and restored them to their families. Thus then we have a very remarkable instance, that though war in itself, be certainly a terrible, and cruel thing, yet doth God often give the victory to a few in a righteous cause, who trust in his aid against the well trained, numerous bands of experienced warriors, *for the battle is not always to the strong*. But we have no record of God's prospering rebellious subjects against their lawful sovereign, however noble, numerous, valiant, wise, or politic. Nay what augments the infamy of all rebellion, and places it in the most unnatural and horrid point of view, is that not only the ignorant, fickle, and deluded multitude are drawn aside from due allegiance to their lawful rulers; but even the nobles, the high ones of the earth, men of the brightest talents, and superior education, whose elevated station, and supposed honourable principles, should make them *disdain* such villainous proceedings; even they are found

As these godly exhortations on this important subject, do so highly concern us of this very day, and cannot be too earnestly enforced both publicly, and in every private family; it may not be unuseful to confirm this particular observation by recommending the reader to consult the page of history, respecting the grievous miseries that were brought on this our own country, in former times, in consequence of the turbulent opposition to the established constitution of the land. It is a notorious fact, that few of the actual promoters of the king's death in the great rebellion, descended to the grave in peace, or were their posterity distinguished by any singular good fortune, but the reverse attended many; and in the still more dreadful revolution, not yet subsided, in a neighbouring kingdom, we have recent and rapid proof of their destruction, who contrived or warranted the execution of their sovereign; a very small number of them having survived that atrocious act, and the manner of death its most being violent and shocking in an extreme degree. Nor can there be any doubt, but that a very short time will leave no memory of any of them, but that deserved infamy, which must for ever attend their character.

unhappily, and to their greater disgrace, too ready to promote, and abet rebellion against their prince, the fountain of their very honors, the support of all their hereditary advantages. This seems madness and wickedness in the extreme. There is yet another circumstance, which, when made a plea for such atrocious conduct, appears more contradictory to right and reason, than any already mentioned: *Redress of grievances, and reformation in religion.* The former is nearly as inconsistent and absurd to be expected from *such* means, as if a man should take a *poison* to cure him of a *light* disorder; for sad experience will fully prove, that of all the possible expedients in nature, *rebellion* is the first to *increase* trouble, oppression, and difficulty of redress, in any shape: and the *last* to lessen the mischief from any mistakes of government, so as to effect any *peaceful* or *valuable* object. As to *religion*, nothing can be more palpably contradictory than to adopt rebellion as an instrument of *pious reform*, it being as inconsistent, as to affirm the necessity of becoming *wicked*, in order to advance in *goodness*, for it is positively opposite to the very principles of all true religion, and is evidently condemned by it in every degree and shape, as all God's word, from Genesis to the Revelations, doth amply testify. But we know, it nevertheless hath been held out as a *decoy* to seduce the bigotted, weak, and enthusiastic parties of mankind, (who even have lost sight of the *substance*, in pursuing the *shadow*) and to these, many are collected *who need only to be called, who go in their simplicity and know not any thing, nor what they do.* Thus the traitorous Absalom began with *sacrificing* unto God, and then with an *affected* shew of *scriptural devotion* were all the treacherous actions perpetrated, that mark the character of what is

* Such was the brutal traitorous Orleans, who met his deserved fate in the same manner that he had plotted and effected against his lawful sovereign.

called, preposterously, *religious wars*. But there is neither rank, talents, or pretence of any kind that ever will be able to defend seditious insurrection. Search all the annals of foreign countries, and even of our own (which bear too many signs of this foul temper in the people) and it will be found, that in no case did rebels, or their cause *continue* prosperous, or end without some signal visitation. Consider the numerous noble families that have been attained, and extinguished by the curse upon this crime! and let this forewarn all such, and their connections, in future times, to avoid a part so big with certain ruin; both instant, and to posterity. And whereas of old, *religion* at times may have been the pretended object; and at others, the *reformation* of the *state*; let what has been said on both these heads, prevent our joining in such desperate adventures, as are likely to *overset* all religion, and government together. Such a religion, as *such* reformers would establish; may be compared to such *virtue* as rebels in general *possess*: and equal probability is there, of benefit to the *state*, by men actuated by no principle, but such a wicked, selfish ambition, as takes pride in being the authors of all confusion, and levelling all distinction of rank, and property. In short, rebellion, instead of countenancing *reformation*, is in itself, a direct enemy to every kind of *regularity*. But as the Gospel of the blessed Jesus is more likely to produce effect when taught in *peace* and *lovely form*; although the teachers should risk their lives in vindicating this true, and peaceful doctrine; so doth wild, enthusiastic, false religion, require the fanatic support of *furious zeal*, which rebels are ever ready to adopt. And all such patrons as have not bravery enough to die for the true faith, are ready to kill all that presume to speak against their indefensible innovations.

But let any cool, considerate person reflect one moment, on the characters of those who under intestine struggles have sometimes been compelled to re-

linguist posts of trust, (which needed virtue, no less than talents to conduct them, with credit to the country); and on the other hand, examine the pretensions and reputation of the rich who labored to succeed them; for the most part spendthrifts, dissolute, in dread of banishment, or confinement from load of debts, or outrage against the laws, and let them then decide, what great advantage the state is likely to receive, from such directors of its treasures, and its councils. Men lost to all morality, and shame themselves, are little qualified to reform the manners, or the statutes of a country. They are more calculated to bring a curse upon the nation, thus loosely governed. And as to the herd of their deluded followers, let sad experience speak the usual method of their reformation, who, wherever they come, bring certain ruin in their train, burning, plundering, and destroying, whatever they cannot use immediately, so that to future generations, the effects of their visits will not easily be forgotten. Let every quiet, sober, godly person beware of being deceived by false pretences of a better religion, or better laws, than what they now enjoy, and strive honestly to engage God's further protection against the snares the enemy of all religion and good government would lay for them, in such contrivances; let them stedfastly and sincerely apply themselves to profit by the means of grace God's goodness has supplied for their spiritual growth, and to be content with that security of the property they now enjoy, nor trust to new reforms, as better calculated to render them more free or prosperous, than they are at present. Let them abide by the old mottos of, *God and our Right; Church and King*; and by a faithful adherence to the principles they instil, they will need no other ensigns or standards, but that of their sovereign, and native country, to which all honest loyal subjects will repair, and glory in supporting, with their lives and fortunes.

To

To conclude, Let all good christians continually recall, and keep in mind, the horrible sin of insurrection, and rebellion against the Almighty Lord of heaven, and earth; against the prince deputed under his dominion, to rule the people committed to his charge; and against their country, and countrymen, to whom, by *nature*, we should all be united by the *strongest* ties. Remember that all laws, divine and human, condemn the authors and abettors of this crime, and therefore it cannot be too much decried, or cautiously avoided. And above all, considering that *eternal* punishment is the certain, and *original* sentence against this sin; nay, that it was *itself* the only *cause* of any such place as hell, or any other sin or misery in nature; therefore, all true servants of Jesus Christ, and all good subjects, will flee rebellion, as the *greatest of all evils in the world*; and embrace a due obedience to God, their prince, and all their natural duties, that they may escape the heaviest misery of *this* life, and the most terrible continuation of woe, and irreversible punishment hereafter; and that on the contrary, they may experience comfort, peace, and happiness, with all other God's good blessings *here*, and finally obtain *everlasting* peace and joy in the kingdom of Christ in heaven, that endless refuge from all worldly storms; the port for which all pious christians steer, under the guidance, and through the merits and intercession of *Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation*.

To whom, &c. they are to be content with that security of their lives and estates, which they now enjoy, not trust to new reforms, as better calculated to render them more free or prosperous, than they are at present. Let them abide by the old mottoes of God and our Right; Church and King, and by a faithful adherence to the principles they still profess. They will need no other laws or standards, but that of their *conscience*, and native country, to which all honest loyal subjects will repair, and glory in supporting, with their lives and fortunes.



As the principal matter contained in both the remaining parts of this homily, relates to that particular cause of rebellion, as derived from the pope's usurpation of the supreme authority over all christian states, and kingdoms; and as all pretences to such unwarrantable power have so long been set aside respecting *this* country, the Editor judged it wholly superfluous, and useless, to detail arguments against an evil, from which we have no longer any thing to fear.

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